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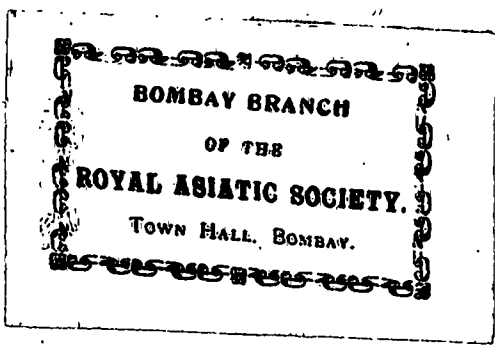

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A

SELECTION

FROM THE

SPEECHES AND WRITINGS

OF THE LATE

LORD KING.

WITH

A SHORT INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR,

BY

EARL FORTESCUE.

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ac

"He possessed those great requisites of happiness—equanimity, cheerfulness of temper, and the habit of constantly employing his mind in the pursuit of noble or useful objects."

Lord King's Life of Locke.

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MEMOIR.

When all questions of commercial policy, and particularly the Corn Laws, form so prominent a topic of public discussion, we are naturally led to recur to the opinions of those who, in past times, directed their attention to such subjects; and it is presumed that the supporters of free trade at this period of its advancement in popular favour, may regard with some interest the views developed by one of its earlier champions in less prosperous times; whilst the friends and admirers of the late Lord King will feel an honest pride in the homage now so generally paid to those great political truths which, when advanced by him nearly thirty years ago, were ridiculed as visionary or denounced as dangerous, not only by overwhelming majorities of both branches of the legislature, but by the great bulk of all the higher classes throughout the country.

Such are the motives which have suggested the republication of some of Lord King's speeches and writings, with the addition of a few other papers and memoranda loosely thrown together by him at different times for his own information or amusement, most of them on separate sheets or scraps of paper, which have been arranged by his widow, and will be introduced according to the order of date at which they are supposed to have been written. The subjoined very short memoir of the author, meagre and

defective as it is, will not, it is hoped, appear wholly uninteresting to the reader, or irrelevant to the general object of the publication.

Peter, the seventh Lord King, was the great grandson of the Lord Chancellor of that name, whose title, conferred on him in 1725, passed in turn to each of his four sons. The youngest of these, Thomas, left two sons, Peter and Thomas, the former of whom succeeded him, and was the father of the subject of this memoir. Lord King was born in 1775, and at the age of six was sent to Eton, where he remained nearly twelve years. Being early impressed with the defects in the system of education then in use at our public schools, he never sought to acquire more of classical learning than was necessary to carry him creditably through his school exercises, but applied himself assiduously to various branches of more practical knowledge, particularly mechanics, geometry, and drawing, and among his early amusements at Eton, was the making a detailed survey and map of the country immediately round it.

He was distinguished among his school-fellows for the cheerful ease of his temper and the kindness of his disposition, of which the writer of this memoir (himself sent to Eton at the age of ten years) received many proofs during the short period that they were there together in 1793. He still recollects with grateful pleasure the happy hours which he spent at that time in the society of his older friend, to whose protection he had been recommended, and in whose room he always found a refuge from the little annoyances, which in those days, more than at present, younger boys at public schools occasionally encountered from their seniors. Then were laid the foundations of an intimacy, which was cemented afterwards by family ties into brotherly affection, and continued without an hour's interruption or

abatement up to the period of Lord King's lamented death.

From Eton he was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, and shortly after succeeded to his title on the death of his father in 1793. After spending the usual time at the university, he made a tour through such parts of the Continent as were then open to British travellers, including Switzerland, Germany, and the north of Italy, and returned home as soon as he was of age.

On taking his seat in the House of Lords, he joined the small band of Mr. Fox's friends, of which the chief leaders in that house were Lord Holland and the Duke of Bedford; the former of whom, in a letter written to Lady King shortly after her husband's death, thus refers to the friendship which subsisted between them:—

"In addition to the pleasure of his intercourse, and of an early, long, and uninterrupted friendship, I have to look back on repeated obligations, as well as uniform kindness, experienced from him. And if concurrence of sentiment in politics confirms and strengthens affection, I believe I can say, that from the period of our entering public life (and, if I mistake not, we attended for the first time on the same day), we never differed twice in our votes for more than thirty-six years."

By Lord Holland he was probably introduced to the acquaintance of Mr. Fox, who, justly appreciating his character and talents, showed him many marks of friendly regard; and as the neighbourhood of their respective homes at Ockham and St. Anne's Hill afforded frequent opportunities of intercourse, some of the most delightful hours of Lord King's life were spent in the society of Mr. Fox.

His first speech in the House of Lords was on the 12th February, 1800, on Lord Holland's motion for a

committee to inquire into the causes of the failure of the expedition to the Helder, and was made mainly by the advice and persuasion of Lord Holland, as appears from the following letter:—

"DEAR LORD KING,

"It may be very impertinent in me to bore you so much upon the subject of making this motion or speaking in the House, especially when I am evidently so personally interested in procuring assistance there, and particularly so on this occasion; but I assure you that as far as I can divest myself of all considerations of the personal advantage which would result to me in the House of Lords from your taking an active part in debates, I think that for the effect of a motion on the subject upon the public, and for your own sake (if you wish ever to take a part in debates), it is desirable that you should make the motion. The circumstance of one man constantly and exclusively opposing every thing that is brought in, and making hostile motions against ministers, is to the full as disadvantageous to the cause of opposition as irksome to himself and the House. I think it is essential that some motion against the Dutch expedition should be made, because you may rely upon its having been an expedition ill-conceived and ill-conducted, and generally felt and acknowledged to be so. Any general disapprobation of ministers is so uncommon among the upper ranks, that when it is actually felt, it is surely imprudent in those who condemn their whole system not to endeavour to bring it to light. And, indeed, without any canting upon public duty, I do not know how one is justified in regularly attending the House and doing nothing to oppose so scandalous a waste of men, money, and honour, as in that expedition. General reasons against my moving it I have given you; but there are other particular ones also.

I have already expressed my opinion on the expedition, and even argued on the absurdity of it while it was going on; but the fact is, that any great failure of government that has made a sensation cannot be brought into public notice with so much advantage to the enemies of the undertaking, as by a person not before in the habit of speaking; and, on the other hand (which I am sure you will believe me, is to the full as strong a motive with me for pressing you on the subject), there is no occasion on which a young man can come forward with greater advantage to himself. If I did not think that you had an inclination to take a part some time or other in debates, I would not press you so much upon it; but if, as I think, you have, there is no way of rendering yourself useful, when anybody can be so, but by beginning now, and I think you can hardly hope for an opportunity which is at once so creditable and so easy to you. For this business is of that sort that the arguments of the inquiry may be confined to a very few words, viz. to the propriety and advantage of investigation in all cases of failure, and to the greatness of the failure in this instance; or one may enlarge as much or as little as one likes on the object of the expedition, the impolicy with which it was planned and executed, &c. &c. &c. What have you to answer to this? Nervousness. An answer I will allow to be forcible, but one which it is childish not to get over, and which, in short, must sooner or later be got over. No person, I assure you, is more nervous than myself about speaking, but it is only to be kept down by practice; and after all you cannot have so mean an opinion of yourself as not to suppose that you would speak as well as above one half of those who speak in the House of Lords, and till you try you cannot be sure of what you can and what you cannot do.

I shall write if I hear of the day being put off in the House of Commons; but I hope at any rate you will come up, if it is only to talk this over.

"Yours &c.

"VASSALL HOLLAND."

Encouraged by the success of his first effort, he spoke again on the 27th of February in opposition to the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and became thenceforth a pretty constant attendant in the House of Lords, and not an unfrequent speaker. But he never was known to correct any speech for the press, except in the single instance of his masterly defence of himself on the 2d of July, 1811*, from the attack made on his conduct in demanding payment of his rents in cash, according to the terms of his written agreements with his tenants, instead of in paper of the Bank of England, which was then depreciated to the amount of above 20 per cent.†

* Afterwards published as a pamphlet.

† In the debate on this occasion, Lord King was most powerfully supported by Lord Grenville, whose eloquent and convincing speech is worthy of every attention. From the same high authority he afterwards received the following letter on the question, whether he should follow up this demand on his tenants by legal proceedings against one of them, a Director of the Bank of England, whom he had selected for the purpose as the best able to bear the expense of the suit: —

"MY DEAR KING, Dropmore, Nov. 10. 1811.

"I found your letter on my return here, and I am vexed that I have so long omitted to answer it. I have not a moment's hesitation in giving it as my decided opinion, that you ought to go on with your action against the Director. To do otherwise would argue a distrust, which you have no reason to feel, in the propriety of your former conduct; and it would be such a concession to clamour as one should be very unwilling to make in any case, but most of all where every principle of common sense and justice is clearly with you.

I cannot agree in thinking that there is any danger of your thus provoking further mischief beyond what would otherwise take place. That ministers will gladly impute to you all the follies and violences into which their system must lead them, is unquestionable; but these, as you well know, are the necessary consequences, proved by all experience,

The speeches, therefore, which have been selected for republication are taken wholly from Hansard's "Parliamentary Debates," and though all are no doubt substantially correct, many are probably abridged, and convey rather the general views and arguments than the precise words of the speaker; such as they are, however, they afford abundant proof of his extensive information on all subjects which he approached, and of his constant desire to make that information available for the vindication of truth and justice, for protecting the rights and increasing the comforts of all, but especially of the humbler classes of his countrymen. These were in fact his only motives for exertion — the sole objects of his ambition in public life.

Lord King married in May, 1804, Lady Hester Fortescue, eldest daughter of the late Earl Fortescue, and by her had two sons and three daughters, all of whom are now living. From the period of his marriage he generally resided for some months of every year, during the sitting of Parliament, at his house in London; but the greater part of his time was passed at his seat at Ockham, to which he was much attached, and which in his various improvements of the house and grounds exhibits many proofs of his taste, both for architecture and garden-

as well as by theory, to be unavoidably attendant on the pursuit of such a system. You have, therefore, no reason to fear that the mischief will really originate with you; and as to the imputation, if it be false you will despise it.

The mere fact of the general issue of private tokens sufficiently shows that matters cannot rest as they now are; nor, indeed, is it in my judgment at all desirable that they should.

In thus recommending to you what I know will be unpopular, not only with the ignorant mass of the community, but still more with our own *timid* friends, I can only say that I am advising you to do as I would do myself; and that I shall have no hesitation in openly avowing that such was my advice.

"Ever most truly and affectionately yours,
"GRENVILLE."

ing. There, in the winter of 1828-9, he collected and prepared the materials for his account of the life of his maternal ancestor, John Locke, whose character delineated in that work, has supplied the words which are prefixed to this, as peculiarly descriptive of him by whom they were written.

The life of Locke, published in the spring of 1829, is too well known by the flattering reception given to it by the public, to call for further notice here.

The excellent health which Lord King had enjoyed from childhood, and which his temperate, active, and regular habits were so well calculated to preserve, seemed to promise a long continuance of his useful and happy life, but early in the spring of 1833 he was attacked with a disorder of the stomach, which baffled all the efforts of medical skill, and brought him to the grave on the 4th of June, in the 58th year of his age.

With the full possession of his faculties he retained to the last the unclouded serenity of mind and sweetness of temper which had distinguished him through life, and during the whole progress of his distressing malady not a sign of impatience, scarcely an accent of complaint, ever escaped him.

An attempt at a general delineation of his character would not come with good grace from one so nearly connected with him as the writer of these pages, but he cannot refuse himself the gratification of transferring to them the tribute paid by a far abler pen to the memory of his departed friend: —

"To Lord King was due the detection and the proof of the effects actually produced by Mr. Pitt's fatal measures; and the excellent individual who rendered so great a service to his country was distinguished for qualities of a very high order. To a strong natural understanding, which eminently excelled in clearness of perception and quickness of apprehension,

he joined habits of study seldom found in the patrician order, but which, as well as his sound and enlightened principles, might well be expected in one who had the glory of descending from the second of English philosophers; for he was the personal representative of Locke, his great-grandfather the Lord Chancellor King having been the nephew and ward of that illustrious person. Although he had far too little ambition, too little thirst for power or for literary fame, ever to exert his talents in any thing like their full extent, he had passed his life in reading, with little other object than to occupy his time agreeably and to improve his mind. His information, therefore, was extensive and accurate. With most parts of historical, philosophical, and theological controversy, he was familiarly conversant; and he had gathered from all his studies, and all his reflections, a firm belief in the title of the people to as large a portion of liberty and of power as they are capable of enjoying with advantage to themselves; a deeply rooted conviction of the sinfulness as well as the folly of intolerance, religious or civil; and an habitual veneration for the pursuit of truth, and truth alone, in all inquiries, whether practical or speculative. In following this worthy object, he was as little to be daunted by perils in action as to be scared by consequences in argument. Difficulties had more influence over him by far than dangers; for though he was of an active turn of mind, and applied himself to his favourite pursuits, whether of agriculture or study with assiduity, yet as he had no great stimulus from ambition or from vanity, he cared little to struggle with what cost trouble, as long as he could occupy himself as well in easier pursuits. The firmness with which he stood up on all occasions for his principles, the great doctrines of civil and religious liberty, would have done honour to the saints and

martyrs of the seventeenth century. The offence which he gave by his warfare with ecclesiastical establishments never abated his hostility. Superficial men fancied they saw in this course an indication of indifference to religion itself; whereas, one of his chief reasons for objecting to a state endowment, was its tendency to undermine religion, as he thought, whether rightly or erroneously, and its liability to be perverted into an engine against the liberties of the country.

"With the solid qualities which have been described, he possessed others of a lighter kind; and to the more valuable acquirements of extensive study, he added several of the more trivial but more elegant accomplishments. He had a keen sense of the ludicrous; his taste in composition was pure; his style natural, simple, and clear. Nothing can be more admirably written than his celebrated "Tract on the Currency;" of which the philosophy, too, is as excellent as the argument and the inferences are practical. He had an excellent taste in gardening and in architecture, down to its most minute details; nor was there a more perfect draughtsman for the more ornamental parts of rooms, upon the pure models which in Italy he had studied, than the political economist who could unravel all the mysteries of currency and exchanges, the philosopher who could throw light on the darker passages of metaphysical science.

"This distinguished person was equally delightful in private, and respectable in public, life. His gaiety was perpetual; natural, lively, playful, no one was more easily interested and amused; few brought more into the stock of entertainment. The difference of ranks was probably less known to him than to any one of the order to which he belonged. Pride of every kind was as alien to his nature as vanity. He seemed unconscious that the Chancellor King or the

philosopher Locke had ever lived; and equally unconscious of his own existence."

Such is the picture drawn of Lord King by the eloquent author of "Sketches of British Statesmen;" and though it is drawn by the partial hand of friendship, few who enjoyed the pleasure of knowing the original, will fail to recognise the likeness or to acknowledge the fidelity of the painting.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES,

&c.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

The following notes made by Lord King for his own use, though written carelessly in point of language and at an early period of life, attest the consistency, as well as the enlargement of his views on the subjects to which they refer.

GENERAL PRINCIPLE.

THAT every man best consults the public good by consulting his own individual advantage. By employing productive labourers, and bestowing his money for an equivalent, he encourages the industrious class: by neglecting his own interest, by profusion, or even indiscriminate charity he encourages the idle class, and diminishes instead of increasing the sum total of the capital of the society.

Illustration of this proposition by the instance of monopolisers, corn factors, &c. &c. in a scarcity.

ON THE BEST AND MOST ADVANTAGEOUS DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION OF A COUNTRY.

Inhabitants sufficient for the perfect cultivation of the earth scattered over the face of the country. — The mass of population collected into towns, and great cities, best conduces to the more perfect division of labour. — In large farms only are found skill, capital, improvement of breeds of cattle, enterprize.

ADVANTAGES OF A GREAT METROPOLIS.

Minute subdivision of labour, fine manufactures, fine arts, convenience, general real cheapness in spite

of apparent and in some instances real dearness, no waste, cheapness arising from regular demand, and great custom approaching the wholesale, great facilities — favourable to intellect and general information, favourable to freedom — Constantinople, Paris, old Rome. — James the First and Charles the First attempted to limit London — Query for the good of their subjects or themselves — London stronghold of the parliaments.

The limit to the size of cities may admit of far greater extension than the world has yet seen from canals and railroads which will moderate the price of transport of grain and provisions. Ten new canals and ten * railways would supply London with provision without any increase of price if that great city was to double its present population.

England and Holland though dear from the effects of excessive taxation, population, wealth, &c. are able in many instances to work cheaper than poorer countries. — Great capital implies low interest and low profits. Extensive commerce implies habits of industry and a genius for trade. Much practice, skill, accommodation, and facilities of every description counterbalance mere cheapness of labour.

RELIGION AND ESTABLISHMENT.

The wealth of the church of Rome and the power of the clergy produced the Reformation. The moderated establishment of the Church of England defended by Mr. Hume as a check against fanaticism; but the great wealth and ample benefices of the Church defeat the end of religion and policy. The wealth of the parochial clergy produces the natural effect of ease in the idleness and indifference of the rectors,

* Meaning, probably, tram-roads.

often in their total neglect and absence. Hence schismatics, neglect of religion, lukewarmness. — Scotch presbyterian clergy, efficient. — The clergy of the Church of England are gentlemen, but not efficient priests. Great prizes of archbishops, deans, &c. and the idleness of the profession attract more into it than into any other, hence the starving curates which no law can prevent.

Tithes discourage improvement. — Tax on produce. — Create animosity between the professors of religion and peace and those they are paid to instruct. — Effect of tithes in favour of grass land, a high bounty. Has not the state a perfect right to pay its servants in the mode most convenient? If a land revenue had been assigned to the sovereign or great officers of state, the state might now order a new mode of payment to these functionaries. It formerly assigned a certain tax on produce to the clergy, it may now resume or modify that grant. — No attack on private property. It is more agreeable to general utility to abolish tithes and grant other revenue than to continue a mode of payment founded on superstition and inapplicable to modern times and necessities. Power of granting leases, a necessary improvement if the system is to be maintained.

PUBLIC DEBTS, ETC.

It has been asserted in mitigation that public funded debt to a certain extent affords a great convenience for the investment of capital which is thereby always ready at command. In lieu thereof, if so great an amount of capital had not been destroyed other modes of investment would have obtained perhaps equally convenient. — Bank shares, as at present, shares in joint stock companies, shares in harbours, canals, iron railways, wet docks, all of them likely to be as dis-

posable as 3 per cents. The mischief of vast funded debt is that by holding out temptation of high interests it increases the idle class who live on the revenue at the expense of the industrious class. Where revenue abounds idleness and prodigality will be found: where profit abounds parsimony and the prudential virtues will be found.

ON COMMERCE, ITS END AND OBJECT.

Distributes and diffuses the produce of different countries and climates, gratifies the comforts and supplies the wants of mankind, stimulates their industry, promotes manufactures and all industry by procuring a market. Freedom from restraint one great essential requisite.—All interference prejudicial whatever may be the motive. — If intended for the benefit of commerce it generally fails from ignorance and mistakes. — Prohibitions and bounties, the usual modes adopted by states. — Their effects—some intentional and others accidental. —.Tithes of this nature. — A bounty on pasture and discouragement to corn.

Restraints on commerce of England. — Old system of monopolies, Queen Elizabeth &c. &c. — India trade to an exclusive company. — Illiberal policy respecting European settlers in India — totally different from West India regulations.

CORN TRADE — CORN LAW SYSTEM.

Laws against forestalling and regrating, remnants of barbarism and ignorant dark ages. — Sanctions vulgar cry and popular prejudices. One positive evil. — Discourages the corn trade, as every man must be unwilling to enter on, and undertake a

business so odious, liable to losses, plunder and fire, with little chance of redress in a court of justice, from a biassed jury and an ignorant judge, in some cases liable to prosecution.—Forestalling never sufficiently carried into practice as there is still a great difference in the price of corn between two years and even between different periods of the same year. — The justices of Leeds established a maximum at the request of the mob, the farmers deserted the market, and the mob restored the freedom of trade. — In Edward the Fourth's reign corn was 4*s*. and 24*s*. per quarter in the course of a few months: forestalling would have prevented this. — The commerce of grain or of any other necessary of life is not to be made an exception to the great general rules of property, which ought in every case to be held sacred. That property shall be at the absolute disposal of the owner is a principle which can never be infringed without real and permanent detriment to the public, it is this which ensures production and creates industry, it is this principle which converts deserts and wildernesses into gardens.

Use of the class of middle men, factors, brokers, jobbers. Much cheaper and better, greater skill and knowledge in each particular branch, greater exactness in proportioning the supply to the demand from minute information and intelligence, exactly analogous to division and subdivision of labour. — If no corn factor &c. existed, the farmers must follow both trades imperfectly, consequently employ less capital and less time in agriculture. It has been stated that farmers would suffer if every one who had occasion for cattle was obliged to travel into the breeding counties or to London or other distant market to sell his corn. — Existence of the trade best proof of its utility or rather necessity in a civilised state of things. Public and private interests exactly coincide as in

most points of trade.—Every factor who stores corn in cheap times has a view to an increase of price, the result of scarcity and diminished supply. He is a public benefactor by withdrawing a part of the stock when little wanted against a season of greater pressure, putting the ship's company to short commons. If the dear period never arrives no great inconvenience can have been suffered in proportion to the means of safety which stored corn would have insured. — Those who trade in corn are in general the best judges of the crop of the year, of the stock in hand, and probable means of supply, and they would never speculate unless on well founded opinion. — Speculations in corn deserve encouragement rather than abuse from the great public benefit and the little real evil.—Mankind are seldom provident overmuch, attending to the present.—Speculation always tends to equalise prices and prevents sudden variations.—Variations in price of corn perhaps a greater evil than high price, wages being adapted to a medium price.—The poor never provident.—Popular belief that corn is thrown away in rivers &c. only current in very dear times when corn is worth much; never when corn is worth little.

Pernicious effects of usury laws counteracting their own end, and aggravating the evil they are intended to remedy.

Expedient of annuity adopted in necessity. — Evasions &c. — Adam Smith says it is a check on projectors, but common prudence forbids making loans to imprudent people; the steady and industrious only can borrow or find credit on their own security. — Evil mitigated by the progressive diminution of the market rate of interest in consequence of increasing capital. — Felt most in war when the rate of interest rises above the legal price. — Interference in bank affairs, Query?

English Navigation Act solitary exception to the evil consequences of regulation. — Peculiar situation of Great Britain. Second country in respect of wealth after Holland, therefore enabled to undertake her own carrying trade with less disadvantage than a poorer country. — Evident policy of promoting at some expense that skill which is necessary for defence and war, besides that the facility of procuring any number of sailors supersedes the necessity of standing forces army or navy. — In this respect the regulation though it damages the national capital may not have been dear bought. — In other countries a navigation act would prevent capital from much more profitable employment, and the poorer the country the greater the profits of their trade. — In France particularly detrimental from the high rate of interest. — Unless the country adopting a navigation act is the second naval power in Europe contending for the preponderance, such a measure can scarcely confer the benefit which it has certainly done to England.

ON CURRENCY, CIRCULATION, PRECIOUS METALS, REPRESENTATIVE PAPER, BANKS AND BANKING.

Alarms, prospect of bad times, as during the French Revolution, and Ireland produce a vast unheard of demand for specie for hoarding. — Fact of guineas being sent to Dublin and silver to France during the bad exchange caused by assignats and notes, not a real unfavourable balance or a high premium given for the gold for hoarding. — Whenever this rage is general several millions may be suddenly absorbed which no bank could ever be expected to employ — All gold coin ought to be issued for the value of the metal and the workmanship employed in coining. Its exportation ought to be permitted duty free, or if any duty somewhat lower than the cost of melting

which is nothing.—Gold bullion is always worth more as an article of commerce in the shape of coin than in ingots; coin of the same purity as standard gold is worth more for this reason, if guineas were exportable they would never be melted and would be sent and return to and from the continent according to the state of exchange, and if during an unfavourable exchange some emergency should render a supply of coin requisite in England it might always be imported in the shape of coin without further time or cost.

Bank deposit;—Why not such in London? Contrary to interest of Bank of England, as less notes would be required for circulation of London, as it is probable that the superior convenience of transfer cash account at a bank of deposit would supersede the necessity of many notes now applied in paying the difference between bankers.

A bank independent of the check of payment on demand always, has altered the state of currency and of exchange. Perpetual fluctuations between countries in both of which the currency is carried on in such bank paper. In this manner each county and parish might have a more or less extravagant exchange.—Ancient commerce must have been barter before invention of bills of exchange; the ship's captain was merchant owner &c. Factories the next step in improvement, commission merchants or correspondents the last and present.

GOVERNMENTS THEIR END AND OBJECT.

To afford security protecting by equal laws the weak against the powerful, maintaining a pure and vigilant administration of justice.—Close and steady adherence to general rules and great principles without bias or partiality, without swerving either to

right or left.—Giving the people an interest in the state. This will counterbalance many and great defects. Supposed to have long supported Holland, the rich merchants remaining in a highly taxed country with low profits of trade, from the distinction and influence which they possessed. — Abstaining from all unnecessary interference in private concerns, allowing no restraint on natural freedom, securing the absolute dominion over property as the best encouragement to production and industry. In a word "laissez nous faire" leave all things to their natural course, the great art of not governing too much. It is only possible to confer indirect benefits, liberty and property the great agents.

Monarchical states when unmixed are totally unfitted for flourishing commerce or wealth,—too military, too despotic, without fixed rules or respect of property, in these commerce is held in contempt; they are in general beggarly warlike nations.—A military turn is no less fatal to commercial enterprise in nations, as in the case of the Romans.

True policy and interest well understood, is to protect property and commerce as the means of raising a state to unrivalled power, to favour accumulation and create new resources. — Instance of Holland.—Power of that republic.—Able to contend with France or England in the time of Charles II.

"God made heaven and earth but man made Holland."—No danger of abating military turn as the nature of the beast is warlike.—Miserable agricultural provinces may thus be converted into the richest empires.—"How few countries are not a satire on their governments."—(Adam Smith's *Philippics on Governments.*)

Taxes ought to interfere with accumulation as little as possible beyond the actual sum levied, and that in such a manner that it ought never to be

taken from capital.—Tax expenditure and not income first. The impracticability and rigour, or inequality.—The parsimonious class the benefactors of the society escape in the present instance, but the next generation bear their fair proportion; in the long run the average is the same.

Taxes ought never to be so heavy as to act in a prohibitory manner or to render contraband trade too profitable; in these cases their expected produce falls short. Two and two do not always make four, oftener three.—Exception to this rule is the tax on spirits and intoxicating liquors. The invention and perfection of this art much to be regretted. The revenue might gain in other respects as spirituous liquors promote idleness and notwithstanding the stimulus to purchase them they must in their effect prove injurious to industry. If some are encouraged to great exertions more are rendered idle by corrupt example, the desire of bettering condition is sufficient stimulus to exertion.—Tax on land unfit except in a rude state of society, when land is the only source of income. Existing incumbrances are a part of the estate and were allowed in the purchase, but new burdens would be unjust and partial in a high degree.—Tax on legacies bad, tending to break down capital, too heavy to be paid out of income, too large a mass at once, and at the most inconvenient time.

COLONIES.

Colonies (quære) as to profitable or unprofitable employment of capital of mother country.—Have been possessed by most flourishing countries—Holland.—Capital employed produces an equal or greater interest than in home trade. Less capital invested in colonies than usually calculated, only a circulating capital supplies the consumption of the colonists.

Little fixed on the land except indirectly by long credit. West India Islands an exception, purchase of slaves, want of machinery, planters residing in the mother country. Different in most American provinces, the owners were the settlers and occupiers who by their labour maintained themselves after the original outfit.—A vent for the redundant population.—New connections, opinions.—A new market offering new productions, creating a valuable spirit of enterprise.

HINTS, 1820.

Committee for Increase of Trade.

As the exchange of the produce of the industry of the towns and that of the country is highly necessary and advantageous to both, so in a more extended sense is it most highly advantageous to exchange the produce of the industry of different countries, which have made very unequal advances in wealth and population.

If the inhabitants of a town were to determine to grow their provisions within the narrow precincts surrounding their walls, applying the power of steam-engines to raise water for irrigation and thus forcing nature at an immense expense, to increase the produce of their immediate territory, every one would allow the folly of that attempt; but in the case here supposed, the absurdity is of the same kind differing only in degree from that impolicy by which a native determines to force the production of the raw material and food in its own soil. The more wealthy and populous, the greater the absurdity of the attempt; and as no power could possibly confine capital to the town which so abused its resources, so in its degree capital will tend to quit the nation which pursues the same impolitic course.

The first is an extreme case. The absurdity of the second instance depends on the degree to which the mischief is felt by the whole community at large, exactly in proportion as such bad policy prevails.

A populous and manufacturing nation naturally exchanges its wrought produce for the raw produce and food raised at a cheaper rate with far less expense of labour in less populous countries and on more

fertile lands. The manufactured goods are sent in return for commodities of another nature and the payment for the manufactured produce can only be made by exchanging raw produce and food. As it is clearly the interest of the manufacturing nation to obtain its supply of raw produce at the cheapest rate, so it is equally clear that the attempts *both* to produce the raw material and food within itself and *also* to export its manufactured produce to the less populous countries, is an impossible attempt. It would suppose that the same nation *could always sell and never buy.*

The protecting duties by which certain manufactures and certain descriptions of produce are unnaturally forced are universally prejudicial to the great general interests of the whole community. They are advantages given to the *few* at the expense of the *many.* The real interests of the great body of consumers, is sacrificed to the gain of comparatively a few producers.

To derive the greatest advantage from the resources which the country possesses, it is necessary to tread back the false steps which have been taken and gradually to undo all that the folly and meddling spirit of rulers has done at the suggestion of selfishness and ignorance. Bring into full operation the true sound principles of the science of political economy. Take the law from none of the contending interests. Allow no exception to good general rules. Arrange and digest a course of sound policy, and pursue it systematically, allowing five, ten, or twenty years for the gradual and final removal of the unwise encouragements which have been given to different branches of industry so that property may not suddenly be injured. To complete the work a rigid system of economy must be observed in the expenses of the government. In this manner full scope and

force will be given to all the means and resources of the country.

QUESTIONS.

Is it the policy of this country under all existing circumstances of a great population, great power of machinery and manufacturing industry, to encourage the import of every description of raw produce and to export manufactured produce in return?

Is the property of a country similarly situated materially affected by the prohibitory system?

What are the usual checks which impede the further advance of countries when arrived at a great state of wealth, civilisation and population?

Is it according to the natural course of things that the prices of raw produce should be high in populous and manufacturing countries and on the contrary all wrought articles of manufactures cheaper there than in countries possessing fewer or no manufactures, less populous and less wealthy, and is not the exchange of these different descriptions of produce necessary to promote the further progress of wealth in countries of such unequal degrees of wealth and population?

Is the progress of population and wealth in a country far advanced in civilisation checked by the increasing difficulty of procuring food and articles of raw produce, and do not these difficulties increase the expense of labour and diminish the profit of stock?

Does the diminution of the profit of stock, if reduced considerably below the level of the profits in other countries tend to force capital to seek a more profitable employment in other countries?

Does not the prosperity of a country and the reward of labour and consequently the happiness and

well-being of the great class of labourers depend on the *proportion* of capital and population?

Do you consider that the system of protective duties on certain species of produce and certain descriptions of manufactures are advantageous or not to the interests of the community at large?

Protecting duties on the produce of the land are beneficial to the few, but in a greater degree are injurious to the many. Protecting duties on manufactured commodities particularly on luxuries are not even beneficial to the few, except at the moment they are established. A manufacturer of a protected commodity gets no higher rate of profit after competition has produced an inevitable effect, than any other capitalist.

The only fair protecting duty is that which places our own manufacturers on a par with other trades. If, for instance, clothiers are subject to a tax of five per cent. on their cloth and five per cent. was laid on the importation of foreign cloth, that would be a *fair protection.*

STATE OF ENGLAND 1820.

Loans borrowed in depreciated money and whilst the country enjoyed the monopoly of the trade of Europe have left debts to be discharged when circumstances have entirely changed. It seems that we are now ascertaining by actual experiment how much can be taken by taxation from the industrious classes and given to the idle without ruinous consequences. Taxation when pursued beyond a certain limit must destroy prosperity. Very great taxation may be supported where there is great fertility of soil, advantageous situation for commerce, abundance of coal, steam-engines, machinery, canals, roads, skill. When taxation is so great as to overbalance these

advantages and presses so hard upon industry as to increase the expense of production, with all these advantages much beyond that of other countries without them, the profit of stock will be so much diminished that capital will be induced to seek a more profitable employment abroad, and it must always be remembered that the increasing prosperity of a country depends on its increasing the amount of its capital stock.

Question. Is the capital of the country at this time increasing, stationary, or diminishing?

Does the weight of taxation (and the corn laws) so much affect the profits of stock by raising the price of labour, as to cause a transfer of capital to other countries? If the profits of stock are insufficient to remunerate the employer, or very much below the rest of Europe, the circulating capital will not be maintained.

CONSEQUENCES OF A GREAT PUBLIC DEBT.

1st. Destruction of so much productive capital.

2d. The giving a portion of the product of industry to the idle, the quantum of industry having been diminished by the loss of capital.

3d. Expense of collection and patronage of the crown.

Holland. The great loans in different wars made great taxation necessary — many falling on the necessaries of life. The profits of stock were very low and Dutch capital was induced to seek employment over the world.

How much were the profits of stock diminished by the taxation of the necessaries of life in Holland, and how much by overabundance of accumulated capital? It is certain they were very low.

When the ports have been opened and a great

importation of corn has reduced the price and has also furnished the people of the continent, the means of paying for our manufactures, the manufacturing interest may be expected to prosper, the agricultural interest to be in great distress. Then again, when from the state of the home supply, the ports shall not be opened but the price of grain nearly or just below the import price, the distress may probably be transferred over from the agricultural to the manufacturing class."

It seems then that in consequence of the great public burdens and the impolitic regulations for the supply of corn, one great class can only thrive at the expense of the other. This, if true, is so unnatural a state of things, that it proves that some great weight overpowers and checks the tendency to improvement which every society naturally possesses. What then will restore prosperity? Strict economy. Removal of taxes on the necessaries of life, such as leather, salt, beer. Repeal of corn laws, and with these of the poor laws, taking the opportunity of abolishing that impolitic system at the time when the condition of the whole class was so much benefited by other regulations.

All taxes which fall on the necessaries of life, indeed all such as are paid by the labouring classes as consumers have a tendency to diminish the profits of stock. The labourer must exist and if the government take from him part of his subsistence in the shape of a tax on corn, or leather, or salt, or any article of his usual consumption, he must either work harder, or forego the use of the taxed articles, without which he scarcely can subsist, or his employer must raise his wages and thus diminish the profit of his stock.

POOR LAWS.

1st. The Poor Laws must be abolished. 2nd. Very gradually abolished. The policy of our courts of justice has been to make settlements easily obtained since the * * * Act (which allowed a labourer to remain where he pleased until actually chargeable). This facility of obtaining settlements is a mistaken policy. Abolish all other means of settlement than those of birth, parentage, and marriage, page 97. Vol. LXV. This would invest fewer residents with the fatal privilege of turning beggars. The best labourers are those who are living where they are not legally settled.

Removals in the decline of life are no doubt distressing but the fear of removals has the greatest effect in encouraging industry, and the very person who in the decline of life is removed from the spot where he has spent the greatest part of his life would perhaps have been a pauper fifty years before if he had been afflicted with the right of asking alms in the place where he lived.

It is no injustice to the parish to have an aged pauper returned to his home although he had spent the vigour of his life elsewhere. The absence of the man for thirty or forty years has been in itself a great benefit.

The power of magistrates of ordering relief should be gradually taken away.

A poor man instead of coming any day to a magistrate for relief ought to feel for a short time the bitterness of that poverty, which by idleness extravagance and hasty marriage he had probably brought on himself. Prohibit all orders of relief by justices between the 1st and 10th day of the month and leave the poor entirely in the hands of overseers,

or of the select vestry for that period. This will teach the parishes to administer their own charity responsibly, and depend on their own judgment.

A proper lesson to the poor, and a proper hint to hasty marriages.

Roundsmen ought properly to be paid at an inferior rate to other labourers. Page 107. vol. LXV.

EXTRACT OF A JOURNAL KEPT ONLY THREE OR FOUR WEEKS.

1822. *Feb. 5th.* — King's speech, deepest regret that a spirit of outrage has led to daring and systematic violation of law in Ireland, "determined to use all means in my power to protect persons and property of loyal subjects;" but not one word of conciliation, or even inquiring into the suffering state of Irish population.

In a few days, Bills brought in to re-enact Irish Insurrection Act, and suspend Habeas Corpus: standing orders suspended in both Houses, passed through all stages in one day in House of Commons.

In the House of Lords, the Bills were opposed on the ground that it was better to employ the regular armed force, than tamper with the constitution, and pass laws giving magistrates a power to transport any man found absent from his house after sunset, without the intervention of jury. I moved that the bill should be passed for three months only, that time might be given to have the bill discussed at a season of the year when business receives attention in parliament, rather than delay it till that late period of the session when every thing is hurried over in a most improper manner, as opportunity for discussing the bill was the more necessary since it was of Irish origin;—was read three times in one day, not having been printed, and contained a clause giving a previous

indemnity for all acts done under the bill by Irish magistrates, at least there are words capable of being construed in that sense, and if doubtful the House ought to have the opinion of the judges on that point.

On the 15th Lord Londonderry produced his plan. . . . . The great *feature* of his speech, and the orthodox faith of the ministry is, that taxation is not the cause of distress, that we must look to nature and Providence for relief. The same men who by their measures for twenty years, by loading the country with taxation, have done all in their power to counteract the bounty of nature and the designs of Providence. Taxes, having the effect of a bad soil and wretched climate, rendering it necessary to apply more labour for the same clear profit.

County meetings for relief of distress. The accumulated expense of labour, rates, taxes, &c. leaves no surplus profit; otherwise why, with the same prices, do not the same lands afford a profit on cultivation as they did thirty years ago? Why can land of inferior quality be cultivated in France? Because taxation on necessaries is so much greater in England now, than it was before the war, or is in France at the present time.

The yeomanry and middle class are nearly unanimous for reform of parliament: they think that the corruption of parliament has led to excessive taxation, and they expect effectual relief only from reform of parliament.

The ministers say that taxation is not the cause of low prices. Granted.—That low prices are the cause of our distress, but they entirely omit the great fact that taxation increases the cost of production, and therefore is decidedly the cause of distress.

Committee of Agriculture appointed in the Commons. Lord Londonderry proposed an alteration of the

law respecting the importation of grain, proposing to substitute a duty by scale according to the average price in England; when wheat is at 65*s.* a quarter duty, on importation to be 15*s.*; wheat at 72*s.*, duty 10*s.*; wheat at 80*s.*, duty 5*s.*; wheat 85*s.*, duty 1*s.*—It would be simpler to have one fixed duty to avoid all complexity, but better to admit corn without duty, and relieve agricultural distress by diminishing the weight of indirect taxes which increase the cost of production.

The increase of these taxes, since 1792, has so augmented the price of labour and poor rate, that many of the old lands formerly cultivated with a profit, and affording a rent, are now not worth cultivation.

Lord Londonderry proposed as a relief to the agriculturists, that the public should hire corn at so much per month, and keep it and turn it in public granaries at the public expense. He wished that this glorious absurdity might not transpire beyond the committee: it is to be hoped that he will gravely, and deliberately, and openly propose this most ridiculous nostrum.

Feb. 26*th.*—Lord Liverpool took occasion to make an exposé of the state of the nation, and explain the views of government in rather more intelligible language than had been done by Lord Londonderry in the Commons: he concluded a long speech by a motion for a few accounts, nothing to the purpose, which no one knew or cared about. Lord Lansdowne followed and made a most statesmanlike speech.

As the debate had, in fact, no object other than mere debate, I called it political steeple-hunting, a great effort and wonderful exertion for an object that might be attained at any moment without any trouble, and when attained not worth having.

I put the contents of Liverpool's speech, viz. that taxation was not the cause of distress, that the remedy

for our distress was to be sought in reduction of rate of interest, and the means to effect that reduction, the application of sinking fund of five millions, into the form of resolutions; and proposed to Liverpool that he should move them as they suited his speech, and not mine, in order that we might now have embodied in that form the opinion of the ministers at this time, in the same ridiculous manner as had been done in 1811, when Vansittart the Chancellor of the Exchequer placed his absurdities on the journals, viz. that in public estimation and opinion, the value of the pound note and gold coin were one and the same.

Feb. 28th.—Salt tax moved by Calcraft. This oppressive tax to the labourer, the fisheries and agriculture, ought to be the first of taxes to be abolished; because it gets rid of a bad tax and the whole machinery of collecting it.

Feb. 29th. — As the Agricultural Committee was revived in the House of Commons, I thought it a good opportunity to ask the minister, in the House of Lords, a question as to the intention of government respecting the Corn Laws, thinking that the whole of the protecting laws as they are called, ought to be swept away, and that the country gentlemen ought not to be diverted by any expectation of obtaining any relief in any manner, except by reduction of taxation.

The landed interest has the real power in the House of Commons, and by them and the continuance of their suffering alone, can any reduction of the influence of the Crown be brought about.

The expenses of the war have enormously increased that overwhelming influence, and the distresses of low prices and low rent can alone induce the country gentlemen to reduce taxation and influence. I bear my share of the reduction of rents with the greatest satisfaction, thinking that no addition of income could

give near the pleasure which is derived from the unmanageable state of the House, and the prospect perhaps of procuring reform of Parliament. It is true, reform will change the government, but the risk of great change is better than the settled overbearing weight of influence, and its necessary consequence misgovernment and abuse.

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The Agricultural Committee having given me an opportunity of saying something to direct the public attention to the Corn Laws, with a view to make the import more easy;—I observed, that a committee of Parliament is now the habitual mode of introducing great change, and screening the minister from responsibility, that there was reason to be alarmed, considering the circumstances of distress and the names of the persons sitting in that Committee: that there were reports of laying duty on importation, which if adopted would be very difficult to get rid of, knowing the tenacity of ministers for any tax: that a bounty on export was the extreme of absurdity, seeing that it imposed a tax to be paid, as an inducement to carry away our corn for foreigners to eat cheaper than ourselves: that the committee consisted of official men, and county members; one to protect the taxes, the other to protect their rents, the same men who were the fathers of that monstrous measure the Corn Bill of 1815, and finding by experience that to be ineffectual, it was to be naturally expected that their present intention was to make it more effectual to their relief. The object of the county members being to serve their friends, and to live, and to keep up the present taxation; no other way of effecting all these purposes could be devised except *increasing* the price of produce, a sort of holy alliance of the Church in defence of high tithes, and of the government in

defence of high taxes, of the county members in defence of high rents, and all these three great powers under influence of one common fear, the fear of plenty. Why not erase the prayer for plenty from the thanksgiving, since they had taken liberties with the liturgy in the case of the late Queen.

I wished to ask whether ministers, as a government, had any opinion on the subject, or as it was an important question, whether they were so divided that they had no opinion, as on the Catholic question? Whether the prime minister had any opinion, or, in short, whether the country was to be left to the mercy and wisdom of the committee?—From such mercy and wisdom the Lord deliver us!

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March 26th.—I moved an address to the King for a reduction of the expenses of foreign ministers, on the grounds of the great increase since 1792. The act for regulating the civil list, in 1816, having provided that any saving made under that class of civil-list expenses should be carried to the consolidated fund. Great jobs, all for parliamentary interest, nearly all the foreign ministers being closely connected with members of Parliament. It was not so formerly.

29th.—Mr. Canning having, two days before, received his appointment as Governor-General of India, gave notice, much to the surprise of his colleagues, of bringing in a bill to enable Catholic peers to sit in Parliament.

It is a curious fact that the standing orders of the House of Lords contain one, expressly stating that no peer shall be deprived of his right, and that it was left at the time when the act passed against the Catholics. It seems that Lord Shaftesbury, who there is reason to think, both moved the standing order (judging from the date), and who was the means of

excluding Catholics from Parliament, intentionally left that order remaining to shew that the exclusion was intended only to be temporary.

The Whigs, in the time of Charles the Second, first sought to exclude a popish successor, but failing, they were driven to exclude Catholics from Parliament. Had they succeeded in the first great object, the second could never have been proposed. Lord Holland will use this historical fact to disprove the Chancellor's assertion that the Constitution of England is *essentially* Protestant.

CORN LAWS.

It requires, on the most moderate calculation, somewhere about a quarter of a century to overturn a bad system wherever the private interests of powerful classes are concerned. For instance, the great city job, the Bank-Restriction Act, continued in force for nearly that period of time, and its worthy coadjutor the great land job, the Corn Bill, may probably require the same time before its iniquity can be fully explained to the dull English understanding, and be made to take its proper place in the records of the wisdom of Parliament.

The statutes at large are a most useful as well as voluminous collection, and perhaps nothing could contribute more to the instruction of the rising generation than a museum or infirmary of all the pernicious abrogated statutes, where, amongst all the numerous specimens of the folly of over-legislation, that monster, the Bank-Restriction Bill now dead, and the Corn Bill hereafter destined to the same fate, will furnish the most prominent and instructive specimens.

It is wonderful, says Dr. Franklin, how preposterously the affairs of this world are managed. Naturally, one imagines that the interests of a few individuals should give way to the general interests, but individuals manage their affairs with so much more application, industry, cunning and address than the public do theirs, that general interest most commonly gives way to particular. We assemble parliaments, and councils, to have the benefit of their collective wisdom, but we necessarily have at the same time the inconveniences of their collective passions, prejudices, and private interests: by the help of these, artful men overpower their wisdom, and dupe its possessors; and if we may judge of the acts, arrêts and edicts, all the

world over, an assembly of great men is the greatest fool upon earth; unless, as the case may be, this is too charitable a supposition, and that the assembly of great men in question, instead of being the greatest fool, is the greatest knave upon earth.

If, for instance, we find that an assembly of landlords to whom a third part of the legislative power of the state is given by the constitution of the country, in trust for the public good, should be moved and swayed by the fear of abundance, the dread of overproduction, the horror of plenty, and all the indescribable nonsense of the same sort, so frequently repeated and so well received by a certain assembly, during the years of low prices 1820, 1821 and 1822, it would not be a very uncharitable supposition to infer that their noble natures were but too well disposed to devise methods for raising the price of food, for their own private benefit and advantage.

When that celebrated navigator, Captain Lemuel Gulliver of Redrith, visited Brobdingnag, and detailed our wars, treaties, policy, and history; when he more particularly described the most august assembly in the world, its members, their education, and all their various and eminent qualifications both judicial and legislative; if, in addition to all these virtues, he had described them as always intent on the public good, and most assiduously labouring for the protection of agriculture, the first of arts, and endeavouring by all means to avert that worst of evils, the too great abundance of the necessaries of life; no doubt, but the discerning monarch of Brobdingnag, when he delivered the well-known comment, "I cannot but conclude the bulk of your nation to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl on the surface of the earth," would likewise have added, "and your rulers and lawgivers the most selfish, avaricious, hypocritical, and detestable."

It is said, that none are so blind as those who will not see; indeed we have the highest authority, of Scripture, to teach us, that our understanding is most entirely perverted by our private interest. We can all see the mote in our brother's eye, but cannot see the beam in our own eye. Every man of common penetration can perceive, in what manner the public interest, and the welfare of the community, is affected by the restrictions, and injured by the trammels, imposed on all the various trades, interests and professions, but, at the very same time, every man makes his own particular interest an exception to the general rule..

The landlord clearly comprehends all the vast benefits of machinery as applied to all manufactures; he is told, and he believes, that the skill, which is able to make the elements of nature subservient to our use, is most beneficial, because it abridges human labour; he is told, and thinks he understands, that the infinite variety of machinery applied in every manufacture, saving, as it often does, nine parts in ten of human labour, gives an increase of nearly ten times the quantity of the comforts and conveniences of life at the same original cost; he feels that in proportion as the labour of producing goods is diminished, in the same proportion is the diminution of price and increase of enjoyment, and, as far as manufactures are concerned, he allows that the saving of labour is the saving of expense, the great cause of abundance, enjoyment and comfort. Ask him, whether it is not equally desirable that bread, the first necessary of life, should be afforded at the least cost of labour and the least expense which the nature of things will allow, and he instantly lays claim to this one single exception to the general rule.

He first extends his paternal care over the thoughtless community; consider, he exclaims, the import-

ance, the necessity of an independent supply of the first necessary of life.

Would you live like Dutchmen, who grow not a tenth of the corn necessary for their subsistence, and are constantly exposed to the mercy of friends and enemies? Would you consent to exist like Hollanders, at the mercy of all the nations of the world, who can so *easily* combine, at any moment, to destroy that singular order, that regular supply, that remarkable steadiness of price enjoyed in no other country in the world; and which, if it had not existed in Holland for near three centuries, might justly be termed incredible, and miraculous, and is a miracle everywhere except where it is tried?

He next assures you, that his interest as landlord is so fast bound up in the general interest that he can have no other object than the general prosperity of the community at large; that if agriculture is depressed manufactures must also decline; that the best market is the home market; that the landlords compose the home market; and that, although it is possible that ninety-nine persons may increase this effective demand for all descriptions of commodities by the reduction of the price of food which they themselves consume, and by the reduction in the price of commodities in proportion to the cheaper labour employed in producing them, yet, that the demand of the hundredth man, because that man is himself, is of more importance in a national view than the fleeting, unsteady, capricious demand of the unknown multitude. So great is the importance of a man to himself.

Lastly, he conjures the consumer to consider, that the true interest of all parties is best consulted by securing, as far as human foresight can secure, a steady, even price, which all must allow to be far preferable to the occasional cheapness of a few years followed by a deficient supply, a security which can only be ob-

tained by protecting agriculture, and by a wise system of Corn Laws, by corn averages fairly taken, and by self-adjusting regulations for the opening and shutting the ports, excluding only a ruinous competition. The law therefore fixes a certain price, when the ports shall be open for a given time to the admission of foreign grain; it omits to provide that the crop shall always be something above an average crop. It requires only this single amendment to effect the purpose of securing for ever a regular steady price, because in the event of a disobedient season, and deficient supply, the price might suddenly rise to 80*s*., the ports be opened for the admission of foreign corn, and the prices be as suddenly reduced to 40*s*.

If it were desired to keep a pond at a certain level, and it was found that the natural springs were not in all seasons sufficient to afford an ample supply, one mode of securing the requisite quantity of water would be to have several feeders to admit their streams as soon as the depth of water was perceptibly diminished. Another and better mode, according to the present fashion, would be to wait until the water had evaporated and the pond was half empty, and, instead of regular feeders, to open the sluices, to admit a flood of water and produce an inundation, from the effects of which it might require some years to recover. It is not less remarkable than commendable, that the question of Corn Laws is always argued on public grounds, and every allusion to rents, profits, and private interests, is most properly omitted, as likely to create an undue prejudice in the minds of the growers and consumers. The whole order of landlords is therefore willing to claim the merit of proper impartiality, and of the most disinterested attachment to the public good.

There is also an order of men, of great importance in the state, who, as they are great consumers and not producers, seem to stand apart from the landlords as

indifferent spectators entirely unbiassed by worldly considerations, the corps of tithe owners, in reality the most interested of the interested in maintaining the Corn Laws in all their vigour.

In the present state of things, the tithe is a tax on produce, and is paid, as all taxes on production are, by the consumers; the tithe therefore is no burden on the farmer, no deduction whatever from the value of the land, as is generally imagined, it only raises the price of corn and falls entirely on the consumer. It does so for the plain reason, that unless the farmers can obtain the usual rate of profit which other capitalists obtain they will employ less capital in raising corn, and capital will be withdrawn until the price of corn shall rise high enough to replace, with the ordinary profit, all the expenses of producing it; one of which is the tithe.

If the tithe were abolished the price of corn would fall one-tenth, because the profit of farmers would increase beyond that of all other trades unless more land was cultivated, more produce brought to market, and the price of that produce reduced, in proportion as the expense of producing it had been reduced, by the removal of the tithe tax on produce. Indeed, it would not make the slightest difference in the price of bread, and the distribution of food, whether the tithe should be collected in the field as it now is, or whether the collector should stand guard at every baker's shop, and every oven's mouth, and as soon as the loaf is purchased, and paid for, slice off the tenth part for the impropriator's benefit.

This plain and easy modus decimandi would make an intricate question palpable to the meanest understanding.

In all well-regulated governments, the great desideratum is, to maintain a wealthy church establishment without imposing any unequal burden on the rich,

and the great, who share all the worldly advantages of it. It is the perfection of art to impose the reality, and full weight, of the burden on the general consumer of corn, and at the same time make it appear that the expense is defrayed by the owners of land, and this object can be attained by tithing and by tithing alone.

To conclude, an estimate may be formed of the effect produced by the various obstructions in the supply on the price of grain, by observing the difference of price here and on the Continent. In the first place, the tithe tax raises the price one-tenth, and then the Corn Laws complete the work, and we may see the price of corn 70*s.* in England, and 35*s.* in France, when the whole expense of transport cannot amount to 7*s.* But whether this is the exact difference or not, or whether our prices would rise and those of the Continent fall, remains to be seen; the difference in the price of corn here, as compared with the Continent, whatever it may be, is the accurate measure of injustice inflicted by a nefarious act passed in the dark ages of legislation (when paper was gravely said to be equal to gold) which operates as a tax on bread without giving the advantage of benefiting the national revenue.

In fact, the existing Corn Laws are a pure unmitigated evil, they prohibit the supply of foreign corn except when the price of grain shall have risen to an extravagant height in the home market, they cause an unnecessary waste of labour in the cultivation of poor lands, they enhance the cost of food, they diminish the profit of stock, they tend to drive capital abroad, they are highly detrimental to trade by limiting the beneficial exchange of foreign raw produce with the manufactured produce of British industry, and, lastly, they are unjust inasmuch as they deprive the people of the supply of the first necessary of life, at the cheapest market.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

EFFECTS

OF THE

BANK RESTRICTIONS.

[PUBLISHED IN 1804.]

"This business of money and coinage is by some men, and amongst them some very ingenious persons, thought a great mystery and very hard to be understood. Not that truly in itself it is so, but because interested people who treat of it wrap up the secret they make advantage of in a mystical, obscure, and unintelligible way of talking; which men from a preconceived opinion of the difficulty of the subject taking for sense, in a matter not easy to be penetrated but by the men of art, let pass for current without examination. Whereas would they look into those discourses and inquire what meaning their words have, they would find for the most part either their positions to be false, their deductions to be wrong, or (which often happens) their words to have no distinct meaning at all. Where none of these be, there their plain, true, honest sense would prove very easy and intelligible if expressed in ordinary and direct language." — *Considerations on lowering the Interest and raising the Value of Money.* LOCKE's Works, vol. iv. p. 103. 8vo.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

MANY of the observations, and all the material facts, contained in the following pages have been adduced in the course of the different debates of the House of Lords during the present Session, upon the two Bills for the Renewal of the Restriction of Payments in Specie at the Banks of England and Ireland. The great importance of the subject suggested the propriety of presenting them to the Public in a more correct and extended form.

An Appendix has been added containing several Tables which show the course of exchange, and the market price of silver, for some years past, together with the amount of English and Irish Bank notes since the period of the Restriction. These accounts have been given, as furnishing the materials from which the several conclusions contained in these pages, respecting the state of the currencies of Great Britain and Ireland, have been deduced.

Since this work was printed, the negotiations between this Country and France have at length terminated in war. This great change in public affairs has given an additional importance to the question concerning the Restriction of Payments in Specie; both by increasing the temptations to an abuse of the present system, and by rendering its further continuance more probable.

May 20th, 1803.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In consequence of the demand for another edition, the whole work has been revised and corrected, and several passages have been added. The additions relate principally to the increase in the notes of country banks; the necessity of putting an end to the present Restriction, and the means of accomplishing that object; and the expediency of some alterations in the present system of coinage.

If the length of this publication had been foreseen, it would have been proper to separate the different topics and heads of argument, and to divide the work into distinct chapters. As this has not been done, the defect is in some measure supplied by prefixing a Table of Contents.

March 20th, 1804.

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ON

THE RESTRICTION

OF

PAYMENTS IN SPECIE.

THE use of paper currency as a substitute for the precious metals is one of the most curious and important facts in the commercial history of modern times; and the extent to which this practice has prevailed in the most improved countries is an evident proof of the advantages with which it has been attended. Those advantages consist in supplying the place of a very expensive instrument of exchange by one which is both less costly, and, for many purposes, more convenient. The system of paper credit, at the same time that it economizes the precious metals, has the further and often more important effect of abridging the labour of receipts and payments, of facilitating the exchanges between distant countries, and of simplifying in the greatest degree all pecuniary transactions. This remark applies generally to all paper currency, whether payable at a future time or at the will of the holder; since both descriptions of notes may enter into receipts and payments and perform the office of money. But the observations in the following pages relate principally to notes payable on demand.

It is one of the most usual objections to such a currency that by introducing a new quantity of the circulating medium it occasions a depreciation of

money, and a consequent advance of prices; whilst on the other hand writers of great authority, and among them Dr. Adam Smith, have asserted that, as each portion of paper displaces an equal quantity of coin, the value of the precious metals is not affected by this change of currency. This opinion, though much nearer the truth than the former, and though it may be considered as true for all practical purposes, is not however a correct representation of the fact. The metals, which by the consent of mankind are used as the representatives of value, are employed either in manufactures, or as current coin, or in the form of bullion for effecting the exchanges between nations; and their value will consequently depend upon the degree in which the supply for these different purposes is proportioned to the demand. It must rise or fall as the demand in each particular instance is increased or diminished. If, for example, by any change in the manners or customs of Europe the use of gold and silver plate should be entirely laid aside, the price of those metals must of course be greatly reduced. The substitution of paper for specie is a fact of the same nature, and has a similar influence on prices. So far as it displaces the coin which would otherwise be employed, it diminishes the demand for those metals for the purposes of coinage, and has precisely the same effect in reducing their general value as an actual increase of quantity to the same amount.

On the supposition therefore of the whole quantity of gold and silver remaining the same, they must, in a certain degree, be rendered cheap by every increase of paper currency. But, as these metals are in universal request and circulate more generally than any other articles of commerce, the effect thus produced cannot be partial, but must extend to all other countries; and it will therefore follow that the actual reduction in the value of gold and silver, which is produced by

the paper circulation of any particular country, is in the proportion of the amount of such circulation to the whole quantity of the precious metals applicable to the purposes of coinage and commerce throughout the world. It is probable that this proportion can never be very great; and experience seems to show that no considerable depreciation is ever produced in this manner. Previous to the revolution in France, the currency of that extensive country was carried on almost entirely in silver; and the rapid emission of *assignats*, which was the consequence of that event, must have very suddenly withdrawn a considerable quantity of that metal from circulation. Yet this violent operation does not appear to have produced any perceptible effect upon prices or even upon the value of silver in Europe. The extension of paper credit, which takes place in common times and under ordinary circumstances, can only produce a very gradual depreciation, which being shared by the world at large, is not felt as an inconvenience by any particular country.

It seems to be a necessary consequence of this reasoning, that the nation, which carries on a considerable part of its currency by means of paper instead of the precious metals, enjoys a great superiority over countries which have not recourse to the same expedient; since it is enabled by this means to save the whole amount of the capital which would otherwise be necessary to supply the proper quantity of the metals for circulation; and it has therefore an advantage exactly of the same kind as it would possess in manufactures, by any of those improvements, in which important mechanical processes are executed by means of less expensive machinery.

It must be evident, however, that the advantages which thus result from the use of a paper currency depend altogether upon the fact of its exactly supply-

ing the place of that coin which it represents; and this quality can only be possessed by a currency which is *immediately convertible into specie at the option of the holder*. So long as this power of conversion continues the notes in circulation must be considered as equivalent to specie; since they exist only by the choice of the public, who, if they preferred, gold and silver, might immediately receive them in exchange. But when the obligation to pay in coin ceases, the currency no longer retains this determinate value, but is in danger of being depreciated from two different causes; viz. by want of confidence on the part of the public, and an undue increase of the quantity of notes. Numerous instances have occurred of paper currencies of this description. In consequence of financial difficulties, many of the European governments, and the American states prior to their independence, have had frequent recourse to the practice of issuing notes payable at a future and uncertain period. In every known instance such notes have uniformly been depreciated; probably by the joint operation of both the causes which have been mentioned. But either of these causes singly will in a certain degree produce the same effect. Though the persons who have the regulation of a currency not payable on demand should confine their issues within the most just and reasonable limits; yet if their credit or solvency is doubted, it is impossible that their notes can circulate at the full nominal value. A similar depreciation must take place, if the currency should exceed that quantity which the effective demand of the public requires; and this must necessarily happen notwithstanding the most implicit confidence in those by whom the paper is issued. That the power of *immediate* conversion into specie is the only circumstance which can prevent the excess or maintain the value of any paper currency is practically shown by the occasional discount upon

exchequer bills and other government securities bearing interest, of which the payment is considered as ultimately certain. A currency exposed to such fluctuations must evidently be a very unfit medium of exchange or standard of value.

The system of paper credit in England prior to the restriction of payments in specie, was founded entirely upon these principles. Its circulation consisted principally of bank notes payable on demand. The proportions of coin and paper currency were divided in a very convenient, perhaps in the best possible, manner; the payments under five pounds being made in cash, and the large payments in paper convertible immediately into specie. A system of this kind appears to unite the conveniences and exclude the disadvantages of a paper currency in the greatest possible degree. A complete substitution of paper for the precious metals in all small payments is attended with several obvious disadvantages. Where, for example, the trade between dealers and small consumers is carried on entirely in paper, the facility of passing notes of such trifling amount, the ignorance of the persons among whom they are circulated, and the length of time during which they may be expected to remain in the distant provinces, afford great temptations to forgery; and this inconvenience, independent of several others which might be mentioned, is sufficient to counterbalance the advantage to be gained by the substitution of paper for specie to so great an extent. In the transactions between dealers, among whom there is much greater skill and vigilance, where the notes are much larger and more frequently returned to the metropolis, instances of successful forgery are much more rare.

Since all paper credit depends essentially upon confidence, it is one of the evils of the system to be

exposed to great derangements in consequence of panics, which produce runs, or sudden demands for cash, upon the banks which issue the paper. It now appears that for some time prior to February, 1797, and indeed during the whole of the year 1796, the Bank of England had been labouring under difficulties originating in an unfavourable exchange, but which were much aggravated by an extension of its issues to government, and an increasing demand for specie occasioned by public alarm. In consequence of this demand the directors found it necessary to diminish the issue of their notes, which in the beginning of the year 1797 were reduced from the average of between ten and eleven millions to nearly eight millions and a half. Had confidence been speedily restored, this reduction would probably have enabled them to survive the danger. But the executive government having, for some reasons, thought it necessary to declare their apprehensions of an invasion, and to take measures of precaution against hostile attacks, a general panic ensued, and a demand for specie from all parts of the country was made upon the Bank of England. This brought affairs to a crisis; and on the 25th of February, 1797, the directors represented to government their inability to perform their engagements to their creditors, and their apprehension that, unless some immediate step was taken for their relief, the Bank would be exhausted of the whole of its cash.

In this new and difficult state of things, it is an important question to determine what is the system of conduct which true policy would have dictated. When private commercial establishments are exposed to ruin by temporary embarrassments, recourse is often successfully had to associations of the principal creditors. It seems highly probable that a similar measure would, in this instance, have been attended

with similar good effects; and that the impending danger might have been prevented by an association of the merchants and bankers of London to support the credit of the Bank; which would have been followed by other associations in all the great and commercial towns. Engagements of the same kind might have been entered into by the individuals of both Houses of Parliament, grounded upon such inquiries into the solvency of the Bank and the causes of its failure as those which in fact took place.

If a positive law for the suspension of payments had been found unavoidable, it ought to have been limited to a peremptory time, under the most solemn parliamentary engagement that it should not again be renewed; and immediate provision should have been made for answering the demands of the public for gold by a new coinage to a considerable amount. Such a measure could not have been attended with any serious difficulty or expense; but had it even occasioned some degree of embarrassment, yet no sacrifice was too great for the support of commercial credit and national faith; and some struggle for such important objects might surely have been expected from that financial courage and fertility of resources, which upon occasions of a very different nature distinguished the conduct of the late administration.

Instead, however, of trying the effect of these natural and obvious remedies, recourse was at once had to the most violent measures. An Order of Council was issued on the 26th of February, for restraining the Bank from payments in cash; and the restriction was confirmed by an Act of Parliament, which was afterwards renewed during the existing session.

So great a revolution in the whole system of our

paper currency was not at first viewed without considerable alarm. The original Act of Suspension, which was itself passed on the 3d of May, was limited to the 24th of June; and a confident expectation was expressed that the Bank would resume its payments during that session of Parliament. A clause was introduced into the bill to enable the directors to renew their issues of cash, even within the period of restriction, upon a certain notice to be given to the Speaker of the House of Commons, and published in the London Gazette. No apprehension was then entertained that the measure could be of any long continuance. Had it been understood that the restriction was to remain during the war, and even for two years after the conclusion of peace, it may reasonably be doubted whether the power and popularity of the minister, unbounded as they were, could have carried the measure through Parliament.

A proceeding thus resorted to on a particular emergency has been continued by repeated renewals for a period of more than six years; and, from the manner in which the subject has been lately discussed in Parliament by the advocates of the suspension, there is no immediate probability of a return to the former system. The same indifference has appeared on the part of the Bank as on that of the executive government. Had the directors acted as became the guardians of public faith and commercial credit, they would long since have used every effort to relieve themselves from the disgraceful situation to which they were reduced. But they have hitherto shown no such disposition. They have willingly accepted, and, it is most probable, have solicited, a continuance of this legislative interference. Instead of exerting themselves to perform their engagements to their creditors, they have shared larger profits among the proprietors of their stock; and there is no reason to

believe that they will at any time resume their payments in cash, unless compelled by a discontinuance of the present suspension.

In the first moments of the alarm occasioned by the stoppage of payment, it was apprehended that a depreciation of bank notes would be the immediate consequence of the suspension. But, though such an opinion was in some respects justified by the conduct of the Bank in their transactions with government, the fact of an immediate discount was not perhaps at that time extremely probable. The association of the bankers and merchants of London in favour of the bank paper gave it a certain currency, and the receipt at par in payment of taxes a certain value, notwithstanding any depreciation which might be produced by an excessive issue of notes. But, besides this, there were several obvious reasons why the directors of the Bank should, for a certain period at least, act with great prudence and moderation. Though they had the most unlimited power of increasing the quantity of their notes, yet some regard to character might reasonably be expected from men who were placed in so new and responsible a situation; and if we could suppose them to be altogether indifferent to such considerations, it was their interest, as a corporate body, to be cautious in the abuse of a power to which the public was not yet familiarised. They must have been aware that a positive discount on their notes or even any considerable increase of quantity, during the early period of the restriction, would reflect great disgrace on the Bank; and was likely, by the clamour and discontent which it would occasion, to render a renewal of the suspension an unpopular and impracticable measure. It was therefore to be expected that the progress of the abuse would be very gradual; and that the issue of notes would for a considerable time, be restrained within

limits not very greatly exceeding what the interests of the public required. Had it been the systematic design of the minister and Bank directors to perpetuate the abuse of an unlimited paper currency, they could not, as it should seem, have adopted any more effectual means for that purpose. It is by no means intended by this remark to charge either of these parties with such a deliberate design. They appear, indeed, by their continued renewals of the original Act of Suspension, to have been utterly regardless of the interests of the public, and to have shown either great ignorance or great neglect of the true principles both of justice and policy. But they have evidently had recourse to these measures as mere temporary expedients to avoid present difficulties; and their conduct and language on these occasions, equally prove that they have acted without any distinct system or extended views, and without any regard to distant consequences.

The public acquiescence during so long a period in a measure which originally excited so much alarm can be attributed only to an opinion that, as there is no positive loss or discount on bank notes, no inconvenience has in fact been suffered, and that the directors have not been guilty of any abuse of the powers with which they have been intrusted. This opinion is much strengthened by the supposed small amount of the notes at present in circulation, compared to the extended wealth and commerce of the country. At the time when the last accounts were presented to Parliament, the amount of the notes appeared to be about sixteen millions, which, though a great increase beyond the average quantity prior to the restriction, is affirmed by Sir Francis Baring and other advocates of the Bank, by no means to exceed the amount which so extensive a commerce requires. The augmented trade of the country, appearing by a

great increase of the imports and exports during several years past, gives some appearance of truth to this assertion.

It is clear, however, that this opinion proceeds entirely upon a supposition, which, though in itself very plausible and countenanced by several writers on political economy, appears to have no foundation in fact. The argument assumes that there is in all cases some given proportion between the wealth and industry of a society and the amount of its currency; and that this proportion is capable of being known and ascertained. It is upon the ground of these assumptions that estimates have been formed of the proportion which the circulating money of any country bears to the whole value of the annual produce circulated; which has been computed by different authors at a fifth, a tenth, a twentieth, and a thirtieth part of that value.* Without enquiring into the particular grounds of calculations which differ so widely from each other, it must be admitted that the amount of bank notes now in circulation bears a very small proportion to the circulating wealth of Great Britain; and that it would be highly probable, on the principles of the above theory, that the directors, in their issues of notes since the Restriction, have not exceeded the proper limits.

But it will be found, on an attentive consideration of the subject, that the supposition of a given *ratio* in all cases between currency and commerce is in itself altogether erroneous; and that there is no rule or standard by which the due quantity of circulating medium in any country can be ascertained, except the actual demand of the public. The requisite proportion of currency, like that of every other article of use or consumption, regulates itself entirely by this

* Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p. 441.

demand; which differs materially in different countries and states of society, and even in the same country at different times. It seems at first sight, from the greater number and amount of exchanges which take place in such a state of society, that a rich and commercial nation would require a much larger proportional quantity of the circulating medium than a country distinguished by its poverty and idleness. Yet the contrary of this is probably the fact. Superior wealth and trade are causes which operate in themselves to increase the demand for currency; but they may be more than counterbalanced by other circumstances. Commercial nations have in this respect a great advantage over others by the more skilful and judicious management of their currency. The first step in the improved system of circulation, is the establishment of banks, which diminish the quantity of current coin or paper, by rendering it unnecessary for individuals to retain large sums for their constant use. A further improvement takes place in the extensive use of bills of exchange and promissory notes, and of the drafts of bankers payable on demand, by means of which all currency is economized in perhaps a still greater degree, and a small portion is made to perform the office of a much larger.* Notwithstanding the superior riches and industry of England, there can be no doubt that its circulating medium, in consequence of these improvements, is much less in proportion to its wealth and commerce than that of France; which, prior to the Revolution, was computed by M. Necker at ninety millions sterling. No commercial writer has ever estimated

* The practical methods by which currency of all kinds is economized in the transactions of the London merchants and bankers are explained by Mr. Thornton in his Essay on Paper Credit. The passages which relate to this subject form the most useful and instructive part of his work.

the circulation of England at any sum approaching to this amount.

Even in the same country the quantity of circulating medium required for commercial transactions is liable to great fluctuations, and is very different at different periods. During a season of prosperity and confidence, the demand for currency, whether consisting of coin or paper, is much diminished by the facility of obtaining credit. The contrary effect takes place in times of alarm and insecurity, which produce unexpected calls for payment, and put all commercial persons under the necessity of increasing their stock of currency as a provision against contingencies.

It is manifest for these reasons that the proportion of circulating medium required in any given state of wealth and industry is not a fixed, but a fluctuating and uncertain quantity; which depends in each case upon a great variety of circumstances, and which is diminished or increased by the greater or less degree of security, of enterprise and of commercial improvement. The causes which influence the demand are evidently too complicated to admit of the quantity being ascertained by previous computation or by any process of theory. It may, in like manner, be shown that the practical rules of the Bank, which have been sometimes supposed to be sufficient securities against an improper increase of their notes, are altogether inadequate to this purpose.

The Bank of England usually issues its notes by discounting bills of exchange to merchants; and it has been supposed that, provided the bills are not fictitious, but relate to transactions between real debtors and creditors, the paper which is thus issued can never exceed the amount which would necessarily circulate if the obligation to pay in specie existed.*

* This seems to be considered by Dr. A. Smith as a general rule applicable to all paper currency; but he does not discuss the question

But the occasional convenience of the merchants has a very remote connection with the permanent demands of the public. Though we should suppose the Bank to possess the means of distinguishing in all cases between real and fictitious bills; yet transactions may pass between individuals, and payments may be made by bills of exchange to a large amount, upon occasions and for purposes which have no reference to the number or amount of such transactions in the community at large. But it is certain that the Directors of the Bank have no such power of distinguishing between bills of different kinds; and that, in any general system of discounting, they must be liable to be imposed upon by what are called bills of accommodation. This uncertainty would occasion great difficulties and constant errors in the use and application of any rule for the regulation of currency founded upon the calls of the merchants for discounts.

But a single practical instance of a great demand for discounts clearly unconnected with a general demand for currency may at once convince us that the rule itself has no just foundation. By the impolitic restrictions of the laws against usury, the Bank of England, like other lenders, is prohibited from receiving an interest upon its loans of more than five per cent. But it may often happen that the rate of mercantile interest, and even that of Government securities, exceeds this sum. Under such circumstances, the merchants have a strong inducement to obtain money upon loans from the Bank; and the demand for discounts in consequence of this inducement may be carried to any assignable extent. Demands originating in such causes have in fact frequently taken place at different periods during the late war;

or state the reasons upon which his opinion is founded. — *Wealth of Nations*, vol. i. p. 455.

and the contrary effect of a diminished demand would naturally be produced by times of peace and prosperity when the rate of interest is low. Yet, at these periods, in which commerce is most flourishing, the currency and circulation of the country would naturally be the greatest.

In real practice, it is well known that the Directors of the Bank do not consider the amount of good bills presented to them for the purpose of being discounted as furnishing the rule by which the amount of their issues is to be determined. Even since the period of the restriction, they have, on various occasions, thought it necessary to narrow their discounts. They are understood to give a certain limited credit to all the considerable bankers and merchants; and to discount for each a certain proportion of bills according to the extent of his credit. But so long as there is no obligation to exchange their notes for specie, it is evident that this proportion is altogether arbitrary; and that it must depend upon the will and pleasure of the Directors, not upon the actual wants or demands of the community.

Many persons have thought that the acknowledged solvency of the Bank of England and its ample sufficiency to pay the amount of its bills in circulation are an abundant security against an excessive issue of paper; or at least that no danger is to be apprehended while the currency is confined within these limits. The remarks on this subject have been in some measure anticipated by the assertion in a former page* that no degree of credit or solvency can maintain the value of an unlimited paper currency without a due regard to the quantity of notes issued. But this is a point of so much importance in the present discussion that a few additional observations may not be unne-

* Page 58.

cessary. The undoubted ability of the Bank to perform its engagements has been much insisted upon in Parliament, and is the constant topic of its advocates, as if this was a disputed fact, or as if it decided the point in question. It may be proper therefore distinctly to state, that the solvency of the Bank is admitted in this inquiry in its fullest extent; the sole object of the present work being to ascertain the causes, by which the notes of a Bank, confessedly solvent and possessing the public confidence, may be depreciated.

It is impossible to deny, in common cases, that the amount of a banker's capital, and his power of raising money, afford in themselves no proof or presumption that he has the means of carrying his circulation to the same extent. Whatever may be his opulence or credit, he infallibly finds that upon every attempt to issue more than a certain quantity of notes, they are returned upon him for payment. But it seems impossible to distinguish between the case of a common banker and that of the Bank of England. A rule of limitation, therefore, founded upon the principle of solvency, would be still more inaccurate than a rule founded upon the demands of the merchants for discounts. By additional subscriptions the capital of the Bank of England and the amount of its property are capable of being augmented to an indefinite extent; but no one will therefore contend that the national currency could be extended without limit, or that it would admit of any considerable increase without great depreciation. Of all possible securities for money the security of Government has always been considered as the most solid and indisputable; yet Navy and Exchequer bills are often brought to a discount by excessive issues; and it is known by experience to those persons who conduct such financial operations, that no quantity of these securities can be

forced upon the market beyond its actual demand, without producing a reduction in value.

Commercial cities, like Hamburg and Amsterdam, whose currency does not consist entirely of their own coin, but is made up of the different coins of neighbouring countries, have had recourse to a particular expedient in order to maintain the standard of their currency. They have established what are called Banks of Deposit; from which merchants, on the delivery of coin or bullion, obtain a credit equal to the intrinsic value of the gold or silver deposited. This credit, being transferable, is called bank money, and is used for payments; the deposits of gold and silver remaining in the coffers of the bank under the guarantee of the state. In these cases it is clear that the currency represents, in the strictest and most accurate manner, the value which it nominally bears. Yet a very slight consideration may satisfy us that even such a currency, if increased beyond the public demand, must be depreciated in proportion to its excess; and that its value could not be restored, except by withdrawing from the bank a certain quantity of the bullion which had been deposited. This in fact is always done, and the excess prevented, by the vigilant attention of individuals, whose interest directs them in what manner to employ the bullion to the best advantage.

A mixed consideration of the price of bullion and the state of foreign exchanges would probably be the best practical rule by which the Directors of the Bank, during the suspension of their payments in cash, could regulate the issue of their notes; yet, in consequence of the irregularities which will hereafter be shown to be produced by the balance of trade, it would on some occasions deviate from the true standard. But, whatever may be the principle by which the Directors, since February 1797, have limited

the issue of their notes, the following observations will prove that they certainly have not adopted *this* rule; though it is highly probable that a general consideration of the price of bullion and of the rate of exchange may have served to guard them against a flagrant and impolitic abuse of their powers.

If the above reasoning is well founded, it must follow that there is no method of discovering *à priori* the proportion of the circulating medium which the occasions of the community require; that it is a quantity which has no assignable rule or standard; and that its true amount can be ascertained only by the effective demand. In countries where the currency is carried on by the precious metals, the quantity is regulated, as in all other cases, by the skill and attention of individuals who are versed in this particular branch of trade; or, in other words, by the bullion merchant, who, in case of a redundant currency, withdraws the excess from circulation and employs it in foreign commerce, or, upon a deficiency of specie, procures a new quantity of the metals to be converted into coin. Where the currency consists of paper convertible into specie, the excess or deficiency is in the same manner prevented by the demand of the public either for cash or notes as circumstances may require.—A paper circulation which cannot be converted into specie, is deprived of this natural standard, and is incapable of admitting any other. The persons to whom the duty of regulating such a circulation is intrusted are in danger, with the very best intentions, of committing perpetual mistakes. The greatest possible degree of skill and integrity can only protect them against gross errors. They will probably in no one instance be exactly right.

That the experience of the officers of the Bank may in some respects have furnished them with the

proper skill and knowledge for the regulation of such a currency (if it ought in any case to exist) it would be injustice to deny; but it may very reasonably be doubted whether they possess sufficient firmness for the proper and independent exercise of so important and difficult a trust. Whatever respect may be due to the characters of the Directors as individuals, it is impossible, after the transactions of 1796, to acquit them of blame in their corporate capacity. During the present restriction of payments in specie they are obviously exposed to great temptations. Political influence may occasion an improper increase of their accommodations to the executive government; and their direct interest in the profits made by the Bank furnishes a constant inducement to the extension of their notes beyond the proper limits. It is the object of the following pages to show, from indisputable facts, that there are strong reasons for believing that the Directors of the Bank of England, and, in a still greater degree, those of the Bank of Ireland, have in reality yielded to these temptations, and that they have made an undue and improper use of the powers intrusted to them by Parliament.

THE VALUE of the coinage in any country may be discovered by ascertaining the price at which any known quantity of the precious metals is sold. Though the advantage of being in the form of coin gives to the metals in that state a certain preference above bullion, yet this seems in no case to be sufficient to produce any great difference in value; and all commercial writers have therefore agreed in considering the market price of gold and silver as the most accurate tests of a pure or depreciated currency. "When under all occasional fluctuations," says Dr. Adam Smith, "the market price, either of gold or silver bullion, continues for several years together

steadily and constantly either more or less above, or more or less below the mint price, we may be assured that this steady and constant, either superiority or inferiority of price, is the effect of something in the state of the coin which at that time renders a certain quantity of coin either of more or less value than the precise quantity of bullion which it ought to contain. *The constancy and steadiness of the effect supposes a proportionable constancy and steadiness in the cause.*" * This observation respecting a currency in coin is equally applicable to a paper circulation not convertible into specie. But on account of the perpetual fluctuations in quantity and value to which the latter is exposed, the market price of gold or silver is a test more peculiarly applicable to such a currency. Bullion is of all articles of commerce the least subject to variations of price; and though, in comparing distant times, its value is greatly affected by accumulation or the discovery of new mines, it may be considered as being stationary during short periods.

Another test of a pure or depreciated currency of great importance, though in some respects less accurate than the former, is the state of foreign exchanges. A currency in specie cannot possibly be degraded by any excess in quantity, since the surplus, having an intrinsic value, may be exported to other countries. But paper not convertible into specie possesses no such quality. Having a mere local value, confined to the country within which it circulates, it *must* remain in that country, and, if multiplied beyond the demand, *must* be depreciated in the degree of its excess. In the course of commercial dealings this increase of quantity is soon discovered; and prices are increased in proportion. A similar effect takes

* Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p. 68.

place in transactions with foreign countries according to the states of their respective currencies. The degraded currency of one country being balanced against the pure currency of another, an allowance is made for the degree of depreciation. An addition exactly equal to this amount is calculated upon all the debts of the former country; and the *apparent* increase of debts has a corresponding effect upon the rate of exchange, which is no longer a just criterion of the relative state of the commercial transactions between the two countries. Though the imports and exports should be precisely balanced, though the debts and credits should be equal; yet, as the currencies differ in their intrinsic values, the exchange, though really at par, will appear to be unfavourable to that country where the currency is degraded.*

During the course of more than three years past an extraordinary and rapid advance has taken place in the price of bullion; and the general course of exchange with the continent of Europe during that time has been unfavourable in the same degree. Within the same period the paper currency of the Bank not convertible into specie has increased to an

* The proof of a degraded currency founded upon the two tests of the price of bullion and the rate of exchange was strongly and successfully urged by Mr. Boyd in his Letter to Mr. Pitt, published in December 1800. But he seems to have given an advantage to his opponents by insisting too much on the *degree* of depreciation, and by attributing to the excess of bank paper a greater effect upon prices than it appears to have produced. In illustrating his position by the advanced price of corn, an article which is subject above all others to great variations during short periods, and which in that particular instance was chiefly influenced by an acknowledged and undeniable scarcity, he was peculiarly unfortunate. Yet his work appears to have been of use in calling the attention of the public to this important subject. Notwithstanding the great commercial names which have been opposed to Mr. Boyd in the controversy, his general reasoning remains unanswered. On the contrary, both Sir Francis Baring and Mr. Thornton, by acknowledging the necessity of *some* limit to the issue of bank paper, without being able to state any practical rule or standard of limitation, have admitted the full force of Mr. Boyd's arguments.

extent of which we have had no former example. It may be assumed, therefore, on probable grounds, that the bullion has not become dear; but that the paper for which it is exchanged has been rendered cheap; because every commodity is cheap or dear in proportion to the abundance or scarcity of the supply. A more particular reference to the several alterations which have taken place in the price of bullion and the state of the exchange, since the restriction of payments in cash in February 1797, will serve to illustrate this reasoning, and to place the whole subject in a clearer point of view.*

Whilst the violation of the public faith was yet recent, and the success of the experiment doubtful, the Directors of the Bank acted with great caution, and confined the amount of their notes to the moderate sum of eleven millions and eleven millions and a half. No practical inconvenience seems to have attended the restriction of payments in specie during this limited issue of notes, nor was any important effect produced either on the state of the exchange or price of bullion previous to the year 1799. It is to be observed, however, that the market price of silver, upon the first alarm occasioned by the order in council, rose rather suddenly from 5*s.* 4*d.* to 5*s.* 6*d.*, probably in consequence of the apprehension of a discount on bank notes; but in the month of June following it was as suddenly reduced to 5*s.* 0½*d.*, and continued at that low price till the end of the year 1798.

The issues of bank paper gradually increasing to 13,700,000*l.* produced a sensible alteration in the exchange with Hamburg and in the price of bullion, which rose from 5*s.* to 5*s.* 8*d.*, being an advance of

* The state of the exchange with Hamburg and of the price of silver bullion for several years past may be seen in the Tables contained in the Appendix. The attention of the reader is particularly requested to these Tables, and to the observations which precede them.

near 14 per cent.; the exchange from the beginning of the year 1799 to the beginning of the year 1800 falling near 20 per cent.

The price of bullion must always be affected in a certain degree by the state of the exchange. A balance against England, by causing a demand of specie for exportation, will have a tendency to raise the price in the market. But the balance of trade alone can never occasion any greater difference in the state of the exchange above par than what will be sufficient to pay the expenses and profit of the merchant who exports the precious metals to restore the balance.* This expense will probably seldom exceed 8 per cent. from London to the continent of Europe; which may be considered as the utmost limit of an unfavourable exchange in a regular state of things. But a degraded currency may affect the rate of exchange to any possible extent, having no other limit than the degree of degradation. Except in the cases of such derangements of currency there does not appear to be any instance of an unfavourable exchange to a greater amount than that which has been stated.

The difference between the effect produced by an unfavourable exchange and a depreciated currency will be seen by the following example. In the year 1795, prior to the restriction of cash payments, considerable sums were sent to the Continent for the purchase of corn, and a loan also of four millions was remitted to the Emperor. These operations had the effect of depressing the exchange about 7 per cent. against England, and of raising the price of standard silver near 5 per cent. above the mint price.

* This is observed by Mr. Hume in a note to his Essay *On the Balance of Trade.* "When we import more goods than we export, the exchange turns against us, and this becomes a new encouragement to export; as much as the charge of carriage and insurance of the money due would amount to. *For the exchange can never but a little rise higher than that sum.*"—*Hume's Essays*, vol. i. p. 282., 8vo.

During the last four months of the year 1799, and at the close of 1801 and commencement of 1802, the exchange was also at 32, or about 7 per cent. against England; but the price of standard silver, instead of remaining at 5*s.* 5*d.* (as in the former instance), rose to 5*s.* 8*d.* This difference was probably occasioned by the increase of the paper currency of the Bank, which then amounted to fourteen millions.

In 1802 the price of silver rose to 5*s.* 11*d.* and 6*s.*, the amount of bank notes having at the same period increased to 15,956,106*l.* In these instances the market price of bullion exceeded the mint price by no less than 16 per cent.; a difference which could not possibly be produced by the state of the exchange.

It will generally be found that the variations in the price of bullion and in the state of the exchange, since the restriction of payments in specie, have corresponded in a most remarkable degree with the variations in the quantity of bank notes. The improvement in the exchange since the conclusion of peace, when truly considered, forms no exception to this general remark. A considerable effect must have been produced, in consequence of that event, by the increase of our exports and the more favourable balance of trade; and it is highly probable, from the flourishing state of our commerce and from all former experience during regular periods, that the real balance is more in favour of England than appears from the nominal state of the exchange.

The currency appears to have suffered the greatest depreciation in 1800 and 1801; the price of standard silver being at 5*s.* 10*d.* and 6*s.*, and the exchange with Hamburg varying from 10 to 12 per cent. below par. The great sums which were at that time remitted to the Continent for the purchase of corn, will in part account for the unfavourable exchange; but this natural consequence of great and unusual remit-

tances appears to have been aggravated by a depreciated currency. The effects of the imperial loans and of the purchases of foreign corn, must probably have ceased early in 1802; and the subsequent high price of bullion, as well as the unfavourable exchange, during the greater part of the year 1802, is to be attributed solely to a depreciation of currency occasioned by the excessive issue of bank paper.*

The amount of notes in circulation during the year 1802 rather exceeded the quantity at any former period of which returns have been made; but the price of bullion was somewhat lower, as well as the rate of exchange less unfavourable, than in the preceding years. There can be little doubt that this difference was occasioned by the peace; in consequence of which event commerce became more active, and

* In a late work which has made a valuable addition to the science of political economy, the *Essay on the Principle of Population*, it is justly remarked by Mr. Malthus that the increased prices of provisions during the scarcity of the year 1800 would naturally require an addition to the circulating medium and to the issues of bank notes. A similar increase of notes must have been necessary to replace the gold coin which has been gradually withdrawn from circulation since March 1797. On the other hand it seems probable that the demand for bank notes arising from these causes has been counteracted, in some degree, by the increased number of country banks since the period of the restriction. It might seem to be an omission, in a work like the present, not to have particularly adverted to the various causes, which at different times may have influenced the public demand for bank notes and which required that their quantity should be increased. But for the reasons which have been given, all calculations and conjectures respecting the due proportion of currency in any given state of things have been purposely avoided in this discussion. The facts are too complicated, and the *data* too few and too uncertain, to justify any cautious inquirer in making such estimates or in reasoning much *à priori* on these subjects. Nor can any safe or satisfactory opinion be formed concerning the proper limits of a paper currency, except what is derived from experience and observation of the effects produced. Even in the latter mode of reasoning, minute accuracy is not to be attained; nor will the most careful reference to the two tests of the price of bullion and the state of the exchanges enable us to ascertain in what *precise* degree a currency is depreciated; though the general fact of a depreciation may be proved beyond dispute.

the circulation of the country capable of receiving a larger proportion of currency without inconvenience.

During the year 1802 the nominal balance was 5 per cent. in favour of Hamburg; but it is probable that the real exchange was in favour of England; there being reason to believe, from the high price of silver, that the favourable balance of trade was counteracted by a depreciation of bank notes to the amount of at least 5 per cent. In general it may be calculated that when the exchange with the Continent is nearly at par, the market price of silver will not deviate in any considerable degree from the mint price. We have at the present time a striking instance of an exchange with the Continent at par, and in an improving state; while the price of bullion is between 9 and 10 per cent. higher than the mint price. This extraordinary difference is rendered intelligible by supposing bank notes to be depreciated, and the real balance of trade very different from the nominal, but by no other hypothesis.

An objection to the market price of silver as the test of a pure or depreciated currency appears to have been urged with some confidence, on the ground of a supposed increase in the price of that metal within late years.* But no proof of this fact has been given, nor would the supposition, if true, account in any degree for the depression of foreign exchanges, which, it must always be recollected, forms an essential part of the present argument. There seems, however, to be no reason to think that the value of silver has materially varied since March 1797. The market price of silver has been made choice of in these calculations in preference to that of gold, because it is a more established article of commerce, the demand for the

* This appears to have been stated by Sir Francis Baring in the debates of the House of Commons on the renewal of the Bank Restriction in February 1803.

latter being much less regular and constant. In the weekly returns of prices, from which the Tables contained in the Appendix have been collected, the price of gold is often entirely omitted for a considerable time together. Yet it is to be observed that the market price of gold, which in common times hardly ever rises above the mint price, has, at different periods since 1797, experienced a very great advance. During the whole of the year 1800 the price of Portugal gold, which is of the same value as standard gold, continued steadily at 4*l.* 5*s.* per ounce, the mint price being at 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.*; a difference of 9 per cent.

The above reasoning might be illustrated by many well-known facts in the history of the British coinage. It is stated by Dr. Adam Smith, that in the reign of King William the exchange was 25 per cent. against England; but the currency, in consequence of the degraded state of the coin, was depreciated in a still higher proportion. It was at that time imagined that though the nominal balance was so much against England, the real balance was considerably in her favour.* A similar depression of the foreign exchanges was produced by the degraded state of the currency prior to the re-coinage of 1772. The price of standard silver was at the same time high, and continued steadily for several years at a rate much above the mint price, though it does not appear ever to have exceeded 5*s.* 9*d.* The new coinage reduced it in a short time to the mint price; and there was a corresponding improvement in the course of exchange.

The enormous issue of *assignats* during the French Revolution depreciated the currency of France in a greater degree than was ever known in any other age or country. During the course of little more than

* Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. p. 215.

two years the exchange between London and Paris appears to have fallen between sixty and seventy per cent. to the disadvantage of the latter place; and it must have sunk still lower in consequence of new issues, if the war had not prevented any further commercial intercourse between the two countries.*

It may be urged, as an objection to the whole of this reasoning, that a depreciated paper currency, as in the case of *assignats*, is necessarily attended with a discount; and that there is confessedly no instance of any discount upon the notes of the Bank of England. But though an excessive issue of notes not convertible into specie has always a tendency towards a discount, it will not in every case produce this effect. The currency of a country is then only in a correct and perfect state, when the real and nominal values of the medium of exchange are exactly equal. But between this full value and that degree of inferiority which occasions a positive and avowed discount there is a considerable interval; and the depreciation may be carried to a certain extent without affording this direct proof; because, in order to produce that effect, it is necessary that the difference should amount to a sum sufficient to repay, together with a profit to the merchant, the whole expense, risk or insurance which is incurred by the exportation of coin to the Continent. Supposing our paper currency to be in this

* It is probable in this case that the *two* causes of depreciation operated; and that want of credit combined with excess of quantity. It has been admitted that the former has had no effect in the depreciation of English bank notes. But in most instances of depreciated paper currencies the two causes will be found united; the want of solvency, from which the measure usually originates, affording great temptations to excess in the quantity of notes. Each of the two causes however, though united, has its proper effect; with this difference, that the depreciation produced by the latter is in the exact proportion of the excess, whilst that which arises from want of credit may be increased to any assignable extent, according to the state of public opinion and the degree of suspicion or alarm.

intermediate state of depreciation, the gold coin which continues to circulate cannot have a greater value than bank notes; the temptation not being sufficient to induce dealers to purchase it at an increased price in order to be melted down and exported. So long, therefore, as the issue of Bank of England notes is confined within certain bounds, which it would be highly imprudent to exceed, it will be impossible to produce the proof of an actual discount in the exchange of gold and silver for notes of the same nominal amount. It will hereafter be seen that the Directors of the Bank of Ireland have transgressed these limits.

The public acquiescence in the present system of currency is another objection which carries some weight, and seems entitled to particular consideration. By a wise forbearance on the part of the legislature bank notes have not been made legal tender: and their present circulation is in a certain degree voluntary: since persons still have the same power as before the restriction, of compelling the payment of their debts in specie. The public creditor, indeed (an important exception!), has not this privilege. But in every other instance the receipt of bank notes in satisfaction of a legal demand is optional; and this being now universal, the conduct of the legislature in restraining the issues of specie may be said to have been sanctioned by the opinion and consent of the public. It must indeed be acknowledged that by this general acquiescence bank paper has been universally substituted for coin, and is become in fact, though not in law, the standard of national currency. Yet it by no means follows that, because the public have for obvious reasons been induced to acquiesce in this measure, they have therefore sustained no injury. That gradual depreciation, which proceeds from the excess of a paper currency, may pass for a long time

unobserved by the great body of the people. Even when the cause of the loss is apparent, men are often induced to submit from the fear of popular odium, and are unwilling to assert their rights in courts of justice at the risk of being charged with disaffection and with a design to injure the public credit. When the loss becomes considerable, this reluctance is at length overcome; and accordingly in some parts of Ireland (particularly in Belfast and its neighbourhood) Irish bank notes are now actually discredited, and all transfers of property are made either by payments in gold coin or in the notes of private banks payable in specie. But notwithstanding this example and the manifest abuses of the Irish Bank, their notes still continue to be received and circulated by the great body of the people of that country.

There are, indeed, several obvious reasons why a medium of exchange of the description of English or Irish bank notes may be depreciated to a certain extent without producing any general alarm or opposition. A currency, so firmly established, cannot, it is evident, be opposed with any success by unconnected individuals. The resistance, in order to be effectual, must proceed from the whole mercantile interest, and from the great body of merchants resident in London or Dublin. But though these persons have a general interest in maintaining the legal standard of public currency, yet having frequent occasion to apply to the banks for loans and accommodation, they have a stronger and more immediate inducement to support the credit of those establishments. It is probable, also, that as bank notes are usually issued in discounting bills for the merchants, the interest of the latter is opposed in some respects to that of the public; since they may have derived a certain profit from the very process of the depreciation. This seeming paradox will be explained on

considering the manner in which the depreciation must take place. It is admitted on all hands that every increase of an unlimited paper currency beyond that quantity which would naturally circulate must have the same effect as an increase of gold and silver; and occasion a corresponding advance of prices. But the effect is not produced immediately upon the issuing of the notes, and some time must elapse before the new currency can circulate through the community and affect the prices of all commodities. It is this interval between the creation of the new paper and the rise of prices which may be a source of advantage to the persons who obtain loans from the Bank. The merchant, to whom the notes are immediately issued, employs them in the purchase of goods at the prices which they then bear, or is enabled by the payment of a former debt to obtain credit for them at those prices. But by the very effect of these notes, when they are afterwards circulated, the price of the goods is enhanced; and the merchant has the advantage of this rise in addition to the ordinary profits of trade. If he is an exporting merchant, he will receive, besides the usual profit, the amount of the depreciation which will have taken place in the currency between the time of purchasing the goods and the arrival of the remittance in return. If, for example, a merchant had by discounting bills obtained bank notes and purchased goods to be exported to Hamburg in July, 1799, when the exchange on that place was near 36, giving three months' credit to his foreign correspondent, it would follow that in the month of October, when his debt became due, his money would be remitted to England at a profit exceeding 9 per cent., in consequence of the exchange having then fallen to 32. In the instance which has been now given, it is not meant to be asserted that the whole of the effect on the exchange was occa-

sioned by an excess of bank notes; but so far as it proceeded from that cause, it is probable that the merchants whose bills were discounted, derived not only a temporary accommodation, but an ultimate profit from the misconduct of the Bank.—The readers who are conversant with this subject will recollect that Mr. Hume, in his Essay on Money, has ascribed similar effects to the increase of gold and silver which took place on the discovery of the American mines.* The merchants of London and Dublin are probably little acquainted with the writings of this philosophical writer, and have never perhaps very accurately traced the steps of the preceding argument. But their experience has undoubtedly led them to the same conclusions; and there can be no doubt, that since the period of the restriction discounts have been obtained from the Bank by commercial men with less difficulty, and that these accommodations, together with the profits derived from hence, have given their minds a strong bias in favour of the measure.

The presumption that the currency of England has suffered a depreciation, which has been deduced in a former part of these pages from a permanently unfavourable course of exchange, must acquire great additional strength, if it should appear, for certain reasons, that a favourable exchange with Europe is in the natural order of things, and a necessary result of the commercial relations of Great Britain. The importance of the subject may perhaps justify a more particular examination of this question than might in strictness be thought necessary for the purposes of the present inquiry.

There is no subject which has so much divided the followers of the old and new systems of political

* Hume's Essays, vol. i. p. 257. 8vo.

economy as the question concerning the balance of trade. By the former, a constant reference is made to the state of exports and imports, and to the excess of the one above the other; the increase or diminution of the stock of gold and silver being regarded by them as the sole test of the profit or loss to the public which arises from any branch of commerce. On the other hand, the economists, together with Mr. Hume and Dr. Adam Smith, have asserted that this manner of estimating commercial advantages is entirely mistaken, and founded upon that popular error which regards gold and silver as alone constituting wealth. They have shown that the demand of every country for these metals is limited, and that every attempt to accumulate or detain a larger quantity is not only useless but impracticable. Upon these principles they have utterly denied the importance of a balance of trade, and the possibility of any permanent and uniform excess of the exports above the imports. The truth of this theory, as applied to commerce in general, has been established by the most satisfactory arguments. But the principle has perhaps been stated by these writers too universally; and sufficient allowance seems not to have been made for particular branches of commerce of great magnitude and importance, in which an attention to the balance of trade may still be useful and necessary.

It is an obvious result of that theory, of which the principles have been thus shortly stated, that foreign commerce, however flourishing, does not introduce any new quantities of the precious metals, beyond that small portion which is necessary for manufactures and annual consumption; and the supporters of the system have accordingly been at great pains to invalidate the proofs which have constantly been adduced of a great and increasing balance of trade in favour of this country. They

appear to have failed altogether in this attempt: their opponents have successfully appealed from theory to facts; and these facts cannot be said to admit of any reasonable doubt. It seems impossible to deny the reality of a constant influx of the precious metals into this country from the continent of Europe. The probability of such an influx might perhaps be inferred from the greatness and extent of our manufactures, the superiority of our skill and industry, and our means of supplying the nations of Europe with commodities of a greater value than those which it is found necessary to receive in return. But, independent of all probable reasoning, the fact of a favourable balance of trade seems to be established by the most decisive proofs of which the subject will admit.

The accounts from the Custom-house books have for many years past constantly agreed in representing a great superiority of the exports above the imports. Though the rates of valuation in these books are for several reasons very incorrect, yet there seems to be no doubt that the accounts have a certain relative accuracy, and are a sufficient approximation to the truth to justify any general practical conclusion of this nature; especially where such conclusions are supported by corresponding circumstances.

The course of exchange, which from the recoinage of 1772 has continued very steadily and constantly in favour of England with almost the whole of the Continent, may be considered as a still more certain and, indeed, decisive criterion of the favourable balance of trade. During the ten years of peace, between the close of the former and the commencement of the late war, the course of exchange with Hamburg, Paris, Cadiz, and Lisbon, and generally with all the great commercial markets of the Continent, was, in a greater or less degree, in favour of

London; and continued in the same state till the foreign subsidies and loans, the great expenditures for corn, and other causes not connected with the ordinary course of commerce, disturbed that uniformity.

On considering the whole of that great commercial system which is carried on by Great Britain with every part of the globe, it will appear that there are circumstances essential to the existence of that commerce, which involve the necessity of maintaining a favourable balance with the continent of Europe. The great trade with the East Indies, enjoyed by this country almost to the exclusion of the rest of Europe, creates a vast annual demand for silver, which must be supplied by those countries where silver is produced, or by those to which it is forced by colonial laws and restrictions. The exportation of silver is the most lucrative branch of the Indian commerce, because it is that commodity which, with the smallest cost in Europe, will purchase the greatest quantity of labour in China and the East Indies. It is the extraordinary profit attending this branch of export trade which constitutes the principal advantage of a commercial intercourse with those countries, and which must have chiefly contributed to enrich those nations which have successively enjoyed this commerce.

It is therefore a necessary part of the system of that country which possesses the greatest share of this branch of trade, to draw from the rest of the western world that supply of the precious metals, which is annually consigned to the East. The direct commerce with Spain and Portugal, the countries immediately connected with the American mines, is inadequate to this purpose, because those nations have not a sufficient demand for the manufactures of Great Britain; and recourse must therefore be had

to the different nations of the Continent, among whom the annual produce of the mines is distributed by the commercial intercourse of Spain and Portugal with the other parts of Europe. It is the immediate consequence of this demand to produce a balance of trade and a favourable exchange with the Continent; which must necessarily continue till the equilibrium of the precious metals is restored between the East and West, and till silver shall no longer represent a greater quantity of exchangeable commodities in India than in Europe.

So long as Great Britain continues to be the greatest manufacturing country in Europe, and to enjoy the monopoly of the Indian trade, the balance must continue in her favour with the Continent, unless some great revolution should remove the restraints on the commerce of the Spanish colonies in America. If that event should ever take place, and a direct intercourse should be established by Great Britain with Peru and Mexico, the balance of trade will be brought to a level, and the average state of the exchange will be at par between England and the continent of Europe. But with the continent of America the exchange will then be as much in our favour as the whole amount of the expense of conveying the precious metals from thence to this country; which expense of transport, as has already been observed, appears to be that which, in all cases of a decidedly unfavourable balance, limits and regulates the rate of exchange.

If we omit the peculiar circumstances resulting from the possession of the Indian commerce, the various facts relating to the state of foreign exchanges and the balance of trade must appear altogether inexplicable. But when these circumstances are taken into consideration, the whole is harmonious and consistent. It is the great and constant demand for silver produced by this branch of commerce, without mines to supply that demand, which imposes

upon Great Britain the necessity of purchasing by means of her manufactures from the continent of Europe a large surplus quantity of the precious metals, to be exported again with a profit to those countries where they are deficient. When the subject is considered in these different points of view, it will appear that in one quarter of the globe our exports must always exceed our imports, and that in another our imports must exceed our exports; but that, in the aggregate amount of the commerce of this country with the whole of the world, the balance will be reduced on an average to the most perfect equality.*

The conclusions which result from this examination of the effects of the Indian commerce upon the state of the exchanges with Europe will be found to have an immediate connection with the subject of our present inquiry. If the above reasoning is well founded, it follows as a necessary inference that, as the real balance of trade in the commercial intercourse of Great Britain with the continent of Europe is necessarily in favour of the former, an apparent balance against Great Britain, or an unfavourable exchange, must proceed from some extraordinary cause which disturbs the natural order of commerce. The necessity of great remittances or an unusual expenditure on the continent of Europe, will to a certain degree produce this effect. But as such causes of irregularity are occasional and temporary, it may be safely affirmed as a general rule, which must ever

* If the accounts of the imports and exports between Great Britain and all other countries could be obtained, it is probable that notwithstanding all the inaccuracy of the Custom-house books, the truth of this opinion would be sufficiently apparent. But the tables of exports and imports, which are printed for the use of Parliament, usually *exclude* the trade with the East Indies. Whatever may be the cause of this omission, it is highly favourable to the views of the persons for whose use these tables are framed, whose object it is, in compliance with the principles of the mercantile theory, to represent a constant excess of exports above imports.

remain true during the existence of the present commercial system of Great Britain, that an unfavourable exchange *long continued* is alone a decisive proof of a deranged and depreciated currency.*

THERE are two remarkable exceptions to that unfavourable exchange which, since 1799, has generally prevailed between London and those parts of Europe with which any commercial intercourse has been maintained. The course of exchange with Lisbon and Dublin has, within that period, been very much in favour of London, though it has at the same time been in a most unfavourable state with Hamburg and other parts of the Continent. It will be found, on considering the state of the currencies of those countries, that in both these instances the same cause has produced the same effect; and that the exceptions afford new proofs of the truth of the general principle.

The currency of Lisbon has been for some time carried on by a paper circulation issued by the Portuguese government during the late war. It has, at different times, been very greatly depreciated in consequence of excessive issues; and the exchange has fluctuated according to the real, not the nominal, value of the currency.

The currency of Dublin, consisting of notes of the Bank of Ireland, appears to have been depreciated in a much greater degree than the currency of England, in consequence of a greater proportional increase of

* In consequence of certain objections which have been urged against this theory respecting the Indian commerce, an attempt has been made to explain and enforce it by considering the subject more in detail, and by showing the manner in which a constant demand for the precious metals affects the rate of exchange. But as these observations have run to some length and are not immediately connected with the subject of the work, it has been thought more convenient to insert them at the end of the Appendix immediately before the Tables.

the notes of that bank. It will be seen from the accounts which at different times have been presented to Parliament, that the actual amount of Bank of England notes in circulation in February 1803 exceeded the average quantity prior to 1797 by the addition of about one-half, being the difference between ten millions and a half and sixteen millions. During the same period the notes of the Bank of Ireland had increased to upwards of four times the amount of the notes in circulation in February, 1797. In the space of six years the amount of that currency had been augmented from 621,917*l.* to 2,633,864*l.* Since the time when the accounts of 1803 were presented, the Bank of Ireland have thought fit, notwithstanding an avowed and increasing depreciation and a highly aggravated exchange, to extend their issues to near three millions, being *five times the amount of notes in circulation at the time when the Act of Suspension was passed.**

This extraordinary increase of Bank of Ireland notes has produced a positive and acknowledged discount in the exchange of paper for gold; and guineas are regularly sold in Dublin for a premium. The decisive fact of a discount on bank notes was distinctly admitted, in the debates of the House of Lords, by those peers who defended the conduct of the Irish Bank; and this discount has lately been stated in the House of Commons by several persons well acquainted with the internal state of Ireland, to be upwards of 10 per cent. The same cause, to which this depreciation is to be attributed, has also affected in a most remarkable degree the state of the exchange; having in 1801 produced a loss of 7 per cent. on all money remitted to London, and of 18 per cent. on the remittances from Dublin through London to Ham-

* See the account of Irish Bank notes in the Appendix.

burg. The loss on money remitted to London has increased at different times in the last and present year to 10 and 11 per cent. The history of commerce does not afford a single instance of so great an irregularity in the exchange between any two countries, except in the case of a depreciated currency.

The derangement of the Irish currency is felt even in the transactions of Dublin with some of the provincial towns. At Belfast and in its neighbourhood Bank of Ireland notes have never acquired any general circulation. The currency is carried on either in specie, or in the notes of private bankers payable in that manner. This difference between the currencies of Dublin and Belfast has produced an actual exchange between the two places in favour of the latter. Where payments are made at Belfast in Irish Bank notes, an additional amount is paid proportioned to the discount. It appears, also, that in the commercial transactions between Great Britain and the different parts of Ireland the rate of exchange differs according to the different standards of currency at Dublin and Belfast; and that money is remitted from the latter place at the same average rate of exchange as before the restriction.*

* The manufacturers of the North of Ireland have lately held public meetings, at which they entered into resolutions expressive of their determination to support the Irish Bank and the circulation of their notes. By these resolutions they exhorted the landowners of that part of Ireland from *patriotic motives* to accept bank notes at par in payment of their rents. But the landholders have very wisely refused to listen to advice, by which they would lose more than 10 per cent. upon all rents payable under existing contracts, and expose themselves to additional loss by further depreciation. They do not choose to submit to an income tax, which is levied not for the benefit of government, but of the proprietors of Irish bank stock. The manufacturers who urged this request, have the means of indemnifying themselves against the loss which may be sustained by their support of the Irish Bank, by an additional charge upon their goods; and it has been stated in the House of Commons that they have determined upon an advance of 10 per cent.

Since the suspension of payments in specie at the Bank of Ireland, the exchange has, with the exception of the first year, been in a greater or less degree uniformly unfavourable to that country. But it appears that, under all the variety of circumstances affecting the commerce or the safety of Ireland during the course of the last twenty years, the balance of trade has never produced any considerable variation in the state of the exchange. There seems, upon the whole, to have been a very great uniformity; the exchange having in some cases been one and a half per cent. in favour of London, which has in other instances been compensated by an exchange in favour of Dublin.

A due attention to the commercial relations of Ireland may satisfy us that this uniformly unfavourable exchange against Dublin must be in a great measure nominal, and that it can upon no intelligible principles have been produced by an actual balance of trade against Ireland. A *really* unfavourable exchange would imply that there had been, during all this period, a constant excess of imports above exports, and a constant remittance of bullion or specie to pay for the difference. Where a country does not possess considerable mines, such a continued remittance of the precious metals can only be made in consequence of corresponding remittances from other countries; and it therefore implies a constantly favourable exchange in some other quarter. But Ireland has no regular course of exchange with any part of the world except through the intervention of England.

Since the year 1798, the exchange, upon an average, has been more than 5 per cent. against Ireland; and to this the depreciation of the English currency also must be added, in order to estimate the total loss which the people of Ireland and the English possessors of Irish property have suffered from this unfavourable

exchange; because the exchange refers to the standard of the British currency, which, from the facts already adduced, appears itself to be in a degraded state. The rate of bullion is the only standard by which the degree of depreciation can be estimated under these circumstances; and it appears that the price of silver in Dublin has experienced a very great advance, having varied from 6*s.* 6*d.* to 7*s.* Irish currency; an increase which, estimating the mint price at 5*s.* 7*d.*, is from 14 to 20 per cent.

Though no parliamentary investigation has taken place respecting the capital or circumstances of the Irish Bank, yet no doubt has ever been entertained of their ability to perform their engagements; and it seems quite certain that the circulation of their notes has not been injured, nor their value lessened, by any apprehension concerning their solvency. It is possible indeed that the dangerous situation of Ireland at different times since February, 1797, may have occasioned an unwillingness to accept a currency not possessing intrinsic value. It may be remarked also that, in consequence of the more ignorant and uncivilised state of Ireland, forgeries have been much more common in that country than in England; and indeed the Irish Bank do not appear to have paid sufficient attention to those improvements in the manufacture of their paper and engraving of their notes, which have been adopted with some success and advantage by the Bank of England. These circumstances may have had a certain effect in reducing the value of Irish bank paper. But there is no reason to think that their influence has been considerable; and it may be safely inferred, from the fact of the depression of the exchange having been so gradual and so duly proportioned to the increasing issues of the Bank, that by far the greatest part of the depreciation which has taken place, must be altogether attributed to an excess in the quantity of notes.

There is so much difficulty in adjusting and regulating a paper currency, not limited by the power of conversion into specie, that slight mistakes, or a small excess above the quantity which would naturally circulate, ought not to be very severely censured in those who have the management of such a circulation. In the performance of so arduous a task they would have entitled themselves to considerable praise from their very errors, if these had been immediately corrected, and if an excessive and improvident issue of notes had been followed by measures of greater prudence and caution. But the evidence of misconduct afforded by the transactions of the Irish Bank is too complete to admit of any reasonable doubt. The concurring circumstances of an excessive price of silver, of a high and increasing exchange against Ireland, and of an actual discount upon bank notes, must have been felt and experienced in the daily and ordinary transactions of commerce; and these facts, in the mind of every man who was informed of the proceedings of the Irish Bank, must have immediately connected themselves with the enormous increase of the paper currency as the proper cause of the derangement. Yet, notwithstanding these proofs of a depreciated currency, the Directors of the Bank of Ireland have still persisted in maintaining the circulation of the present high and unprecedented amount of their notes. It is impossible, under such circumstances, to acquit them of the charge of gross misconduct, even upon the probable supposition of great ignorance and inexperience. An important trust, which upon mistaken principles of political necessity was committed to this corporate body by Parliament for the public benefit, appears to have been perverted to the private interest of the proprietors of their stock.* An undue

* Since the restriction of February, 1797, the Bank of England have declared several *bonuses* on the capital of their stock; and notwith-

advantage has been obtained by the Bank in the exact degree of the excess of their notes; but the loss and injury to the public, as in all cases of depreciated currency, has been in a much greater proportion. An indirect tax is thus imposed upon the community, not for the benefit of the public, but of individuals. It is levied in the most pernicious manner, and is of all taxes the least productive in proportion to the loss and inconvenience sustained.

If the expressions which have been used concerning the Directors of the Irish Bank should be thought harsh and severe, when applied to men who are respectable as merchants, and who probably discharge with propriety the duties of their private stations in society; it may be answered, that the observations appear to be warranted by facts, and that they relate to the conduct of the Directors as a corporate body, and not to their characters as individuals. An appeal has been made on the present, as on similar occasions, to the personal merits of those who are the subject of the charge; but this defence, though in these cases perhaps the most frequent, is of all others the least satisfactory or conclusive. It is an unfortunate but most unquestionable fact, that the standards of public and private morality are in many minds extremely different; and that, when acting as members of public bodies, men are often found to acquiesce in measures, and even to avow principles, which they would acknowledge to be dishonourable in common life. The restraint of public opinion, one of the most effectual securities of human virtue,

standing a very considerable loss during last year occasioned by the fraud of one of their officers, they have advanced the 5 per cent. property tax without diminishing the dividends of their proprietors. During the same period the Irish Bank have at different times increased their dividends, and in the present year have declared a *bonus* of 5 per cent. in addition to an increase of dividend from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

is much diminished on those occasions where we act in concert and conjunction with many others; and as applied to the proceedings of corporate bodies, for which no individual member is responsible, it seems to be altogether without influence. If to these considerations we add; that the transactions of the Irish Bank have till the last year undergone no public inquiry or examination, and that the account of their notes was then for the first time required by Parliament, we shall be at no loss to explain the reasons why the public conduct of the Directors has been so contrary to those principles of honour and good faith which they probably maintain in private life. "All men," says Mr. Burke, "possessed of an uncontrolled discretionary power, tending to the aggrandizement and profit of their own body, have always abused it; and I see no particular sanctity in our own times that is likely by a miraculous operation to overrule the course of nature."

Whatever may be our opinion respecting the propriety of continuing to the Directors of the Bank of England the unlimited powers which they now possess under the Act of Suspension, yet experience has clearly shown that the Directors of the Irish Bank are altogether unworthy of this confidence; and that it is of the greatest importance to the commercial and monied interests of that part of the empire, that the currency of that country should no longer be exposed to a continuance of the present abuses.

The obvious and only true remedy of these disorders in the currency of Ireland is a return to the former system of payments in specie. But this remedy cannot with any justice or propriety be applied while the restriction of the Bank of England continues; since it would be very difficult, or perhaps impracticable, for the Irish Bank during this period to provide the necessary supply of specie. The only

temporary expedient which it remains for the Legislature to adopt, is to fix some positive and effectual limitation to the issue of notes by the Bank of Ireland. But we have already seen, in the former part of this work, the great and insuperable difficulty of assigning any limit founded upon a supposed estimate or calculation of the quantity of circulating medium which the present state of Ireland would require. It seems therefore more safe and prudent to resort at once to a plain and practical rule, in the application of which there would be no difficulty or inconvenience. The measure which was proposed upon this occasion in Parliament was, *an obligation upon the Irish Bank to pay, upon demand, in notes of the Bank of England.* A regulation of this kind would impose upon the Irish Directors the necessity of restraining the issue of their notes, and of bringing them to the standard of the English currency, which appears to be much less depreciated than that of Ireland. It could not reasonably be complained of as an act of injustice towards the Irish Bank, which prior to the restriction of 1797 was under the obligation of paying in the British currency of gold, and might now, with equal propriety, be called upon to liquidate its debts according to the present currency of this country.

It was the object of the proposed regulation to restore the Irish currency to the level of that of Great Britain by placing the Bank of Ireland in the same situation with the chartered banks of Scotland; with respect to which no greater inconvenience has been suffered, nor has there been any greater depreciation of currency since the restriction of 1797, than has been experienced in England during the same period. The reason of this is obvious; because the currency of every part of Great Britain may be resolved at the will of the holder into *one common medium.* The power of converting the paper of the chartered banks into

English bank notes or English bills of exchange, according to the convenience of the parties, prevents in the most simple and effectual manner any excess of the currency of Scotland beyond that of London. The banks of England and Ireland, in consequence of the suspension of payments in specie, have been made independent of every controul over the issue of their notes, except their own discretion and forbearance. If the same privilege had been extended to the chartered banks of Scotland, it is impossible to suppose that the currency of that country would not have undergone an alteration, and produced an unfavourable exchange between Edinburgh and London.

An unlimited paper currency cannot exist in any shape or under any circumstances with security or advantage to the public; but it is least in danger of being grossly abused when it is intrusted to some *one* experienced and responsible body. The establishment of *independent* banks in different parts of the empire has the necessary consequence of subjecting the value of the circulating medium to perpetual fluctuations in every district in which such banks are established. Under such a system the notes of the several banks, like the degraded coins of different countries, must vary in their relative values, and be depreciated in different proportions according to the various degrees of prudence and moderation with which the power of issuing the notes is exercised.

The proposed regulation would not promote in any considerable degree the circulation of English bank notes in Ireland, because they would for several obvious reasons, and particularly on account of the danger of forgery, be a very inconvenient medium of exchange in that country. It is for the same reasons indeed that such notes circulate at present so little in the distant parts of England, or in Scotland. Like the gold coin prior to 1797, they are the standard of

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currency in those districts, but appear very little in general circulation.

It has been urged as an objection to the proposed obligation upon the Irish Bank to pay upon demand in English bank notes, that it would compel the directors to issue gold for the purchase of these notes, and thus defeat the purpose of the act of restriction. But it may be easily shown that no such effect would take place. The notes of the Bank of England would be purchased in the same manner as every other English commodity, not with gold but with good bills of exchange on England, for which Irish notes would be paid. But if the Bank of Ireland continued to discount as largely as at present, and to maintain the same quantity of their notes in circulation, they would soon discover that they carried on a very disadvantageous trade, and that the loss in the exchange was much more than equivalent to the profit of discounting. The directors would be convinced by a very short experience (if they can be supposed to be now ignorant) that a reduction in the issue of their notes would produce a correspondent improvement in the exchange; till at length, when the amount of their notes was sufficiently diminished, they would no longer be called upon for Bank of England notes. The whole effect of the regulation would be to keep down the redundant quantity of Irish notes, and raise their value to the level of the British currency; and not in the least, as has been erroneously supposed, to extend the circulation of English notes to Ireland; because a preference must always be given to Irish bank notes, unless where the inferiority of value in the latter is more than sufficient to counterbalance the manifest inconveniences of employing foreign paper as the medium either of circulation or exchange.

The obligation of paying in English bank notes would unquestionably make it necessary for the

Irish Bank directors to narrow their discounts, and to limit the accommodations which they at present afford to the merchants of Ireland; and great commercial embarrassment would certainly ensue if this assistance, in the extent in which it is now afforded, was very suddenly and abruptly withdrawn. This, therefore, has very properly been urged as one of the difficulties of the proposed measure. But the inconvenience might, it is probable, be sufficiently obviated, and any sudden shock prevented, by allowing sufficient time to the Bank for a cautious and very gradual diminution of their notes. If it should still, however, appear that some inconvenience is unavoidable, it could not reasonably be stated as an objection of much weight or importance. An inconvenience of the same nature, and of much greater extent, *must* at some time happen, and will be the inevitable consequence of the renewal of payments in specie, at whatever time that event shall take place. The regulation which is now proposed would be a first and preparatory step to that measure; and, by making the change more gradual, would diminish, or perhaps entirely prevent, the embarrassments which might result from a great and sudden diminution in the quantity of the circulating medium. It would at the same time have the effect of establishing one common standard of currency for the two great divisions of the empire.

In conformity to this opinion, a clause to compel the Bank of Ireland to pay upon demand in English notes was moved in the committee of the House of Lords on the renewal of the bill in 1803 for the suspension of cash payments in Ireland; and in order that the diminution of Irish notes might be as gradual and attended with as little inconvenience as possible, it was proposed that the operation of the clause should not commence till six months after the passing of the

act. But on further considering the probable amount of the excess of Irish notes and the great reduction which will be necessary, it seems doubtful whether this time would be sufficient; and whether a still longer period ought not to be allowed. Perhaps a regulation obliging the Irish Bank to reduce a given amount every month till the exchange is brought to par (if such a measure could be enforced) would be the best practical expedient; as it would leave very little to the discretion of the directors, who may reasonably be suspected of being almost as deficient in skill and judgment as they evidently have been in a sense of their duty towards the public.

'The irregularities in the currency of Ireland appear for some time to have attracted the attention of persons connected with the government of that country, and to have produced a suspicion of some errors in the conduct, or some defect in the constitution of the Irish Bank. In order to obviate the evils which have been experienced, a proposal is said to have been made for the consolidation of the two national Banks of England and Ireland. But, though this measure is supposed to have had the approbation of some distinguished characters, it is difficult to understand in what its public advantage would consist; or why it is more to be desired than an union of the chartered banks of Scotland with the English national Bank. The proposal and the favour with which it has been received, can be attributed only to a certain predilection which exists in some minds for great and splendid establishments, abstracted from any consideration of their utility; but, like many other specious and imposing projects, it would probably disappoint the sanguine expectation of its admirers. The only plausible ground upon which such a measure could be recommended, would be its supposed tendency to increase the credit of the

Irish bank notes, and to restore their value in circulation. But it does not appear that the solvency of the Irish Bank has ever been suspected; and it has been clearly seen, in the course of these pages, that an unlimited paper currency cannot be preserved from depreciation by any degree of public confidence, unless there is also great prudence and caution on the part of those who issue the notes. Upon the supposition of an union between the two banks, the currency of that country must still remain under the management of the present directors. But it would be difficult to show how the extension of a great establishment, and a more divided responsibility, could have any tendency to improve the principles or conduct of its individual members; or in what respect an alliance with the Bank of England would produce in the Irish directors a more judicious system of management, or a stronger sense of public duty. The countenance which the project of a consolidation of the two national banks is said to have obtained in certain quarters, makes it necessary that this should be mentioned among other projected remedies of the Irish currency; though it is by no means probable that the measure will ever be carried into effect, or that the English Bank directors will consent to such an union.

The great addition to the quantity of Irish bank notes affords so clear and natural a solution of the unfavourable state of the exchange, and is so consistent with the acknowledged depreciation of the currency, that it may appear almost superfluous to advert to any of the various attempts which have been made by those who have controverted this opinion, to explain the facts upon different principles. But for the sake of illustrating a subject, which from the mistakes of the most experienced reasoners must

be acknowledged to be somewhat obscure, it may be of great use to consider some of the most usual and popular objections.

It was strongly insisted in the debates of the House of Peers, and has been repeated in several publications, that the number of absentees who draw their rents from Ireland, the Irish creditors resident in England, who receive their interest and dividends from thence, together with the necessity of importing various articles of English produce of which the price has lately been much increased, must necessarily produce an unfavourable state of exchange; and that, whatever may be the proportion of commercial exports and imports, the great remittances for the purposes which have been mentioned must in all cases turn the balance very greatly to the disadvantage of Ireland. This effect was supposed to be much aggravated by the increase of remittances since the Union.

Such an objection cannot be seriously urged, except by those who have taken a very slight and superficial view of the subject, and are little conversant with the nature of commercial exchanges. It must undoubtedly be admitted that very considerable payments arising from Irish property are annually made to residents in England, and that these have probably increased since the Union; but it by no means follows that these payments have been made by an actual transfer of specie or bullion; which transfer, it has already been observed, is always implied in a *really* unfavourable exchange. Such continued remittances cannot possibly be made by a nation, like Ireland, which has no means of providing a constant supply of the precious metals. A country which is so circumstanced, does not export any part of its gold and silver except upon some sudden and unforeseen emergency not connected with the ordinary course of com-

merce.* Its constant and regular foreign expenses (those which form a part of its system of trade, or arise out of its established relations with other countries) can only be provided for by exporting the annual produce of its land and labour. There is indeed no other mode of paying such remittances; unless it could be imagined that specie or bullion was imported for the mere purpose of re-exportation; an opinion which would be manifestly contradictory and absurd.† In the case of Ireland it is evident that the course of trade and the proportion of the exports and imports must adjust themselves to the nature of its connection with Great Britain. In proportion to the increased necessity of remittances to this country the exports of Irish produce and manufactures must be increased,

* Such, for example, as the foreign subsidies and demands for corn, which have been often alluded to in the course of this work; in which cases there being a sudden demand for bullion without the means of immediate supply, the price rises beyond its natural level, and forces out a part of the specie and of that average quantity of the precious metals which is required for commerce and manufactures. Yet even in these instances it is probable that the greater part of the remittances was paid by an increase of exports and diminutions of imports. The alarms for the safety of Ireland which prevailed in 1798 and 1803, by occasioning great and sudden remittances to this country, may be mentioned also among the causes which might force out a certain quantity of specie and affect the rate of exchange.

† Yet this is asserted in strong terms by an anonymous writer, who appears to have taken great pains upon this subject and to write with very fair intentions, in an *Enquiry into the Depreciation of Irish Bank Paper* lately published at Dublin. The work contains many just opinions with respect to the great evil and injustice of a depreciated currency; but neither explains the cause nor proposes an adequate remedy. From the acknowledged solvency of the Irish Bank the writer argues that it is impossible their notes can be depreciated, not comprehending that this effect may be produced by excess of quantity. He attributes the evil to what he calls the balance of remittances, which he distinguishes from the balance of trade: but the distinction, for the reasons which are given in the text, is without a difference. The remedy which he proposes is the payment of dividends and all public debts in English bank notes; a measure of justice to the individuals to whom those sums were paid; but which, leaving the Irish Bank at full liberty to extend their issues, would not remove the existing evil, so long as Irish notes continue to be the standard of currency.

and the imports of English produce and manufactures diminished, till the amount of foreign demands is paid by Irish exports, and the balance of trade is restored. This operation of commerce is much assisted by the fact itself which creates the demand for remittances. The residence of Irish proprietors in England has the necessary effect of diminishing the Irish imports, because the expenditure of revenue is transferred to another country; and it also increases the export of that produce which is no longer consumed at home. If any doubt should remain as to the manner in which Irish remittances are made, the truth of the above opinion would be established by an appeal to facts. By a reference to the Custom-house books at Dublin for the year ending on the 5th of January 1804, it appears that there has been an excess of the exports above the imports, of 900,000*l.* The same, in different degrees, is probably true of preceding years.

Another topic, of more general interest and importance, has been much insisted on, in the discussion of the present question, by the advocates of the Irish Bank. They have asserted that the disorder so visible in the circulation and state of exchange is in a great measure to be ascribed to the extended system of country banks and the increased amount of that description of notes. As this supposed cause of a depreciated currency is not confined to Ireland, but exists at least in an equal degree in our own country, it is entitled to very particular consideration. The subject of country banks has been much discussed since paper credit has become so interesting a question; and the general opinion, so far as it can be collected from speeches in Parliament and the language of popular writers, seems on many occasions to have been unfavourable to them. Many of the supposed evils arising from paper circulation have been imputed altogether

to these establishments; and a hope has been frequently expressed that they should be made the subject of some species of legal restriction. The difficulty of framing any specific regulation upon this subject has been sometimes stated as the only reason why such a measure has not yet been proposed to the consideration of the Legislature. As the nature and effects of country banks seem to have been much mis-represented, a few general remarks on their advantages may be permitted in a work on paper circulation, however obvious some of these topics may appear to persons who are conversant with these inquiries.*

It is wholly unnecessary upon this occasion to enter into any general defence of the principles of commercial freedom. Those principles have been repeatedly established by the most decisive arguments; and their good effects are so conspicuous in the commerce and manufactures of this country, that they are usually admitted in theory even by those persons who contradict and desert them by their practice. It may in general be affirmed that the very existence of any particular employment and of any branch of trade in a state of freedom is alone a proof of its utility. The system of banking, like every other improvement by which labour is abridged, divided or simplified, is the natural produce of a refined and civilized state of society. It can arise only out of the public demand for such an employment of capital, and such a species of skill and knowledge; its success must depend altogether upon its utility; and it is profitable to the undertaker in the exact degree in which it contributes to the advantage or convenience of the public.

The proof of the beneficial effects of the banking system does not depend solely upon general presump-

* The general advantages of country banks are candidly admitted and fully explained by Mr. Thornton in his *Essay on Paper Credit*, chap. 7.

tion, but is established by an appeal to experience and facts. It is an error to suppose that this branch of employment is of late or sudden growth; it has gradually arisen in the natural course of commercial improvement. It is well known that long before the general establishment of regular banks, there were in most market towns of England responsible tradesmen, who gained a profit by drawing and discounting bills, and who found it their interest to establish a regular correspondence in London for this purpose. An important part of the banking business existed and was practised in these cases; but, being connected with some other branch of trade, the name of a banker was wanting. During late years, in consequence of the increase of wealth and extension of commerce, regular banks have been established in those places by persons who confine themselves to that branch of business. But it is a general maxim, confirmed by all experience, that skill is improved in proportion as labour is divided; and there can be no doubt that commercial transactions have been much facilitated and promoted by these establishments.

In a great commercial country, there is indeed the most obvious necessity for such a particular branch of industry, in order to carry on the payments either between distant places, or between the capital and the remote provinces. The tradesman applies upon these occasions to the banker; because the latter by means of his various connections and correspondents can either make a remittance to a distant part, or procure a payment from thence, with much greater ease, expedition, and cheapness than persons not engaged in that business; and a considerable degree of risk, delay, and inconvenience is thus saved to individuals at a comparatively small expense. But the ease and expedition with which these pecuniary transactions are carried on, must evidently tend to

facilitate all commercial intercourse, and must contribute in a peculiar degree to the advantage of the internal trade of the country, of all different branches of commerce the most important and beneficial. In this view of the subject, it must appear that the advantage arising from the banking system is of the same kind, though produced by different means, as that which is derived from the formation of new roads or canals, or any other improvement by which communication is promoted, or industry rendered more active.

The general benefits of paper currency are assumed in the present discussion, and most assuredly will not be contested by the advocates of the Bank of England. But it is impossible that any extensive country can have the full advantage of a great paper circulation without the assistance of provincial banks. There are several reasons why a paper currency, which is issued by a national bank and is payable only in the capital, can never circulate with great advantage or to any considerable extent in the distant provinces. To the complete success of a paper circulation it is necessary that there should be no considerable danger or apprehension of forgery, and that there should be the means of ready and immediate payment. But this degree of convenience and security can be found only in notes which are issued and payable in the immediate neighbourhood, or within a moderate distance.

Forgeries are prevented by the care and vigilance which provincial banks, by their local situation, are enabled to exercise in their own immediate districts, within which their notes chiefly circulate. A national bank can never exert the same degree of vigilance in distant provinces, even though its conductors had the same strong interest in the detection which is felt by individual bankers, who sustain the

whole loss and discredit occasioned by suspicions of forgery.

Country banks are beneficial to the public in another respect, by affording a security against many of the evils which are inseparable from a great paper circulation. In consequence of the very general use of bills of exchange, the credit of different traders, their cautious or improvident conduct, and the general course of commercial transactions in each particular district, may be discovered with tolerable certainty from the state of its negotiable securities. From the nature of their employment bankers have the most effectual means of detecting the various practices of accommodation bills, of drawing and redrawing, and other abuses to which the system of paper credit is exposed; and it is their own particular interest, as well as that of the public, that such transactions should be discouraged and prevented. The knowledge that such expedients for raising money are likely to be discovered, though it may not entirely prevent these practices, must evidently diminish their frequency.

The multiplication of banks, as is observed by Dr. A. Smith *, instead of diminishing, greatly increases the security of the public. The circulation of notes being divided into a greater number of parts, the failure of any one company becomes of less importance, and occasions less embarrassment. The competition of rival banks produces in all of them greater caution, and more skilful and judicious management. It is indeed by no means improbable that the country banks have indirectly contributed to the success and security of the Bank of England, by rendering the directors of that establishment more cautious and circumspect than they might perhaps have been under other circumstances.

* Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p. 498.

A very numerous party have ascribed to the establishment of provincial banks a great part among the causes which have contributed to the late increase in the price of provisions. The charge appears to be founded upon the advantage which they afford to farmers and dealers, by assisting them with loans and credit, and enabling them to withhold their produce from market. It is impossible on the present occasion to enter at large into this topic. A very long work would be necessary to convince such reasoners of their error, since they are evidently unacquainted with the first principles of that science upon which they presume to judge. It may now be considered as one of the best established doctrines of political economy, that the interests of the producer and the consumer do not really differ; and that it is the tendency of all speculations in articles of sale to produce a regular and uniform supply, and to bring prices as nearly as possible to a state of equality. It will follow from hence that the interests of society must be promoted by increasing the means of pecuniary accommodation, and by affording a judicious credit, which may enable farmers and dealers to exercise their skill and judgment in the most unrestrained manner as to the time and mode of bringing their productions to sale with the greatest advantage. It is also to be observed, that every mode of employment by which time and labour are saved, and indeed all commercial improvements whatever, must contribute to general cheapness.

That country banks have been often established upon insecure principles, and that they have sometimes engaged in imprudent and improper speculations, are facts which no reasonable man will deny. But to lay great stress upon such instances would be like producing the weekly lists of bankruptcies in London as arguments against the general advantages

of commerce. It must always be remembered that from necessary causes the great majority of mercantile speculations are useful and profitable. There are, unquestionably in all rich and commercial countries certain periods of enterprise and adventure, in which either from want of information or from some temporary circumstance, particular branches of trade are pursued too eagerly and carried too far. But as the error in such cases must soon be discovered, these irregularities can never be of any long continuance. The failures, to which every course of over-trading gives rise, are the natural and only true remedies of such excesses.

It has been strongly urged as a subject of charge against country banks that, by the occasional embarrassments to which they are exposed, they are frequently obliged to have recourse to the Bank of England for large quantities of specie; and that at different periods prior to February 1797 they occasioned very great inconvenience to that establishment by these sudden and unexpected demands. It seems indeed probable that the increased number of country banks made it necessary for the Bank of England to increase its deposits of specie. But this is an inconvenience which must unavoidably result from a great extension of paper currency, and from the monopoly which is given to the Bank of England by the legislature. In consequence of this monopoly the Bank is the only great deposit of gold in the kingdom; and it has undertaken the task of supplying the demands of the public for specie in return for the benefits enjoyed by means of its exclusive privileges. The real extent of this grievance has never been distinctly explained by the advocates of the Bank; and it has probably been much exaggerated. But it cannot with any justice be stated as an argument why either the Bank of England should be released

from the obligation of performing its contracts, or country banks should on this account be made subject to legal restrictions. The sudden demands which were made upon the Bank during the late war appear to have arisen from political circumstances, and must have happened though no country banks had existed. When the causes which produced the stoppage of the Bank were investigated in Parliament during the session of 1797, it appeared from the evidence, and was distinctly stated by the Reports of the Committees, that the Imperial loans and other circumstances producing a great expenditure on the Continent had diminished the usual quantity of bullion at the Bank, and disabled the Directors from meeting a temporary alarm.* No material part of the em-

* Mr. Thornton in his *Essay on Paper Credit* has discussed at considerable length the causes of the embarrassment of the Bank, which he attributes in a great degree to the limitation of discounts and the consequent restricted issue of bank paper. He compares the crisis of 1797 to the difficulties experienced in 1793, in which it is well known that the issue of commercial exchequer bills to the amount of about two millions and a half put an immediate end to the difficulties which were then experienced. But the two cases will appear on consideration to differ in some important respects. In 1793 a state of extraordinary commercial prosperity and confidence was suddenly checked by the war, and a violent shock was given to the paper circulation of the country. Several great failures took place in different parts of England: an universal panic ensued; and a great demand for cash or bank notes was made upon the metropolis. But the Bank was compelled to restrain its accommodations, and limit its discounts by the general insecurity of the times. At this juncture commissioners under the authority of Parliament gave a credit to responsible persons in want of immediate pecuniary assistance, which individuals or a commercial body could not prudently have given; and the guarantee of government enabled those who held it, to apply to the Bank for an extension of their discounts, which might then be safely granted on the security of the new exchequer bills. In the beginning of the year 1797 there were no great failures, nor any general apprehension of insolvency among commercial persons. A sudden alarm of invasion, and apprehension of insecurity, appear to have been the causes which at that time produced a discredit of Bank notes. In this state of opinion the public were not satisfied with any currency except gold and silver; and it is most probable that any new issue of notes would have been immediately returned upon the Bank to be exchanged for cash, and would have contributed to increase the em-

barrassment was then attributed to country banks, nor were they much the subjects of discussion in Parliament. It is indeed difficult to discover from what cause the present complaints and prejudices against them have originated, except from their supposed influence on the prices of provisions, of all the charges which have been made against them the most groundless and unreasonable.

Having considered generally the beneficial effects of country banks and the principal charges which have been urged against them by their opponents, it will be proper to advert to the particular objection which is more immediately connected with the subject of the present inquiry. It has been frequently asserted by those, who have defended the cause of the Bank of England, that the excessive issue of country bank notes has produced a general depreciation of currency. Mr. Thornton indeed, the most able and judicious of their advocates, has candidly acknowledged that this popular opinion is entirely unfounded. He admits, what may in truth be asserted as an universal rule, that the circulation of all banks is limited by the extent of their capital and the public demand for their notes. They can in no case transgress these limits without considerable danger. The contrary supposition will be found to involve the greatest absurdities. If country bankers really possessed this power, it must necessarily follow that there would be great partial depreciations; and that the value of the currency and prices of commodities would vary according to the different degrees, in which the due quantity of notes for circulation was exceeded by the

barrassment. The real nature of the grievance appears to have been fully understood at the time. No person then thought of proposing an issue of commercial exchequer bills, notwithstanding the experience of their good effects in 1793. Yet if the diminution of bank notes in 1797 had been occasioned by commercial insecurity, and not by a demand for specie, this was an obvious remedy.

bankers of different districts. But no such irregularities are, in fact, ever experienced. An excessive issue of notes by any particular banker is soon detected, if not by the public, at least by the interested vigilance of his rivals; an alarm is excited; and he is immediately called upon to exchange a very large portion of his notes in circulation for that currency in which they are payable. Such a demand is always attended with great loss and often with total ruin; and the knowledge that such consequences may be expected will deter bankers in general from making these experiments.

Though this argument in favour of provincial banks is merely negative it ought to satisfy every reasonable mind, since it completely proves the existence of a practical limit to notes of that description, though it does not shew the precise manner in which the limitation takes place. But the contrary doctrine is so prevalent, and the whole subject is of so much importance, that it may be proper to attempt a more direct proof of the truth of this opinion. Many persons who admit the impolicy and injurious effects of the Bank restriction, have at the same time greater prejudices against country banks, and are persuaded that the increased amount of their notes has added to the evil and contributed to aggravate the general depreciation. On the first view of the subject it might seem probable that every addition of paper currency, of whatever description, would have a tendency to depreciate the value of the whole by increasing that excess which is itself the cause of the evil. But it will appear, on further consideration, that the paper of private banks immediately convertible into Bank of England notes has no effect on the value of general currency; the notes of private bankers being at present regulated by the standard of Bank notes in the same manner as paper currency of every description was

formerly regulated by the gold coin. This opinion is by no means inconsistent with what is often alleged and what must be admitted as an undoubted fact; that there has been a great increase of the notes of private banks since the Act of Restriction of 1797. It may be easily shown that this increase is an immediate consequence of that measure, and that the additions to the amount of Bank of England notes since that time have had the necessary effect of increasing in an equal proportion the paper of private banks.

The system of paper credit in this country owes its existence and its whole form and structure to the natural course of commercial improvement operating under an entire freedom from legislative restraint. The same principle of public convenience, which originally suggested the use of paper currency, occasions also the adoption of notes of various descriptions, adapts them to certain districts, and adjusts and determines the limits within which they circulate. The paper of the Bank of England, though it is the standard of currency and may occasionally be used for remittances through every part of the kingdom, does not circulate generally and for common and daily payments, except in London and within a certain distance from thence. The notes of the chartered banks of Scotland are confined to Edinburgh and its district. Those of the several provincial banks circulate in their immediate neighbourhood, or within what may be termed the natural districts of the banks which issue them. This practice prevails so universally, and the exceptions are so rare, that it may be considered as a general rule on the subject of paper credit, that the circulation of any description of notes cannot be extended (at least for the ordinary purposes of exchange) to any considerable distance from the banks which issue them without great public inconvenience; and that such an extended circulation never

in fact takes place under ordinary circumstances and in a state of commercial freedom. The danger of forgeries, the difficulty of detection, the trouble of converting the notes into specie or into other notes when too much worn, are all considerably increased by a very wide and distant circulation. These circumstances, together with the efforts of rival bankers confine the paper of each bank within its particular district or *sphere of circulation*. All attempts to extend this sphere are effectually resisted; and every note, which is accidentally carried beyond its proper limits, is transmitted to the bank from which it issues for immediate payment.

As the public convenience determines the *limits* of the various districts of circulation, so it ascertains the *quantity* of notes within each district. It must always be remembered that currency, whether consisting of specie or paper, is in itself wholly unproductive, and that every superfluous quantity in the hands of individuals is attended with a positive loss to the holder. There is therefore a constant effort on the part of each individual to reduce this quantity as much as possible; and from hence have arisen the various inventions of banks and paper credit and all the other expedients for economising currency which have been mentioned in a former part of this work. Where the currency of a country consists entirely of the precious metals, it has never been doubted that, if the quantity of specie is improperly increased, whether by government or from other causes, it will immediately be reduced within its due limits by the care and attention of individuals, which will always prevent any permanent excess of the circulating medium. But the same inducement to diminish the quantity and prevent the excess of currency must operate with equal force in all given cases, and whether the medium of exchange consists of coin or paper. The notes of private banks

are as much the representatives of value as any other species of currency, and their circulation is regulated by the same principles. So far as they are necessary for effecting the payments and circulating the wealth of the district, they merely supply the place of the specie which would otherwise be employed, and cannot therefore affect the general value of money. If they exceed the quantity which is requisite for these purposes, the excess will be returned upon the Bank, to be exchanged for the currency in which they are payable. The experience of private bankers enables them to discover the average amount of this requisite quantity, and their profits and success altogether depend upon their adapting the supply of notes as nearly as possible to the demand.

It is thus that the medium of exchange, whatever it may be, which constitutes the standard of value and is the element into which all other currencies may ultimately be resolved, must determine the quantity and value of every inferior currency. In a mixed circulation of coin and notes there can be no permanent superfluity of the latter, because they would in that case be exchanged for gold. Since Bank notes have become the standard, the circulating paper of private banks is in like manner guarded against excess within their particular districts by the power of conversion into Bank notes. Where the amount of the former exceeds the just proportion, they are immediately changed for Bank paper, which is transmitted to London in payments, and the currency of the district is relieved from the burden which has been thus occasioned.

There are, therefore, necessary causes which prevent the notes of private bankers from being depressed in their value below that of Bank notes. The same reasons also prove they must always be brought down to the level of the latter, and cannot be of any higher value;

and that in every case where that portion of the currency which constitutes the general measure of exchange is degraded, there must be a corresponding depreciation of the *whole* of the circulating medium, however variously it may be composed. This will be evident from considering the instance of a mixed currency of coin and paper; in which if the value of the coin is by any means suddenly reduced, the nominal rise of prices will require a corresponding addition to the circulating medium. If, for example, one million sterling of good coin and of full weight and purity is found by experience to be necessary for the circulation of any country, and this coin should be degraded 10 per cent.; the price of all commodities will rise in the same proportion, and the nominal million of base coin will be insufficient for the circulation of the same wealth, because it would contain only 900,000*l.* of intrinsic value. There must consequently be an addition of 10 per cent. to the degraded coin in order to contain the same value as before the depreciation. If, in the case which is here supposed, a certain part of the currency consists of paper, the latter portion also must be depreciated in the same degree as the coin of which it is the representative, and will require a similar increase. But an excess of Bank notes not convertible into specie has been shown to be the same in its effects as a debasement of the coin; and when such notes are become the standard of value, and are depreciated by excess of quantity, they must have the same influence in all respects on the notes of provincial banks and on the general mass of circulating paper.

It is a necessary consequence of this reasoning that the notes of private banks have increased since the Restriction of 1797 *in the same proportion as the issues of the Bank of England during that period.* The average amount of the latter at that time con-

sisted of about eleven millions, and there has since been an increase of one half the original sum. The amount of country bank notes in February 1797 is not known; but assuming an arbitrary sum, and supposing them to be double the amount of bank notes, there must have been an addition of twelve millions to that description of paper. This is stated upon the supposition that the districts of circulation of the public and private banks have remained the same. But if from a preference given to their notes, or any other reason of public convenience, the country banks have since 1797 encroached in any degree upon the district of the bank of England, there must have been a still greater increase of their paper. If, on the contrary, bank notes have acquired a wider circulation since 1797, the increase of country bank notes has been proportionally smaller. As the profit of every bank arises from the amount of its notes, the channel of circulation in each district will be fully supplied, and the increase of private paper must at all times keep pace with that of the Bank of England. If the latter had only been depreciated, and if there was not a corresponding excess of country bank notes, the relative proportion of prices would be altered between London and those parts of the country where the currency was carried on in some more valuable medium, and an exchange would take place between London and the several districts of the provincial banks in favour of the latter and against the metropolis.

The truth of this theory, and the explanation which has been given, perhaps at too great length, of the manner in which all paper currency is influenced by that medium, which is the local standard of value, is practically illustrated by the instance which has formerly been mentioned of the exchange between Dublin and Belfast. It is manifest from this example

that if the people of Scotland, like the landholders of the North of Ireland, had not acquiesced in the Act of Restriction, but had insisted upon receiving gold in payment of their notes, the value of their currency would have been maintained and would now be of the standard of gold coin, while that of England has undergone a silent depreciation; and this advantage would be marked by an exchange in favour of Edinburgh, and a certain deduction on the amount of English bank notes when circulated in Scotland. The superior value of the currency of the North of Ireland, consisting principally of the notes of private banks, which is now universally acknowledged, is a decisive proof not only of the abuses of the Irish bank but of a fact which is far more interesting and important—that provincial banks are limited in their issues by the demands and convenience of the public, and that they have no power of reducing the value of general currency.

A due comparison of the advantages of country banks, which arise from the nature of the system, with their inconveniences, which depend entirely upon partial and accidental circumstances, may perhaps lead us to the conclusion that these establishments are, upon the whole, highly beneficial to the public, and entitled to the protection of the legislature; and that to suppress the circulation of their notes, or to restrict them in any manner tending to give an exclusive privilege to the Bank of England, would be as unjust and impolitic as to grant a monopoly of any other branch of skill and industry to any private merchant or company. When we consider the nature of the banking system, of all other branches of trade the most complex and delicate and deriving its very essence and existence from the confidence of the public, it will appear that there is

no subject upon which legislative interference would be more improper or more pernicious.

As the course of this discussion has been interrupted by the consideration of several subordinate topics of great importance, it may be necessary to recall the attention of the reader to the principal points which have been attempted to be established. This recapitulation of the general argument, together with a view of the injurious effects of the present system, and some remarks on the conduct which it may be proper for the legislature to adopt for the removal of the existing evils, will naturally close the present enquiry.

The whole of the preceding argument rests upon a few great and undeniable principles:—that the indispensable requisite and only true foundation of every just medium of exchange is *intrinsic value;*—that the precious metals have been selected for this purpose, as possessing this quality at all times and places in the greatest degree and with the fewest variations;—and that the establishment of a medium of exchange, either not really possessing, or not truly representing intrinsic value, is contrary to the first principles of justice.

The advantages of a paper currency have in the course of this discussion been most fully admitted; but it has been shown that these advantages altogether depend upon its being a just medium of exchange, that is, upon its being exactly equivalent to that quantity of the precious metals which would otherwise be employed for that purpose. In order that it may possess this value, it is necessary that a currency of this description should be immediately and unconditionally convertible into specie. The power of this conversion is the only quality which can give it any just title to be considered as the re-

presentative of value, and the only security against the abuses to which such a currency is exposed. Without such a power it is in constant danger of being depreciated both by want of credit and excess of quantity. The operation of the former cause is uncertain and irregular, being dependent upon public opinion and the credit of the government or bank by which the notes are issued. But the latter cause is constant and uniform in its effects. Excess of quantity *must* depreciate the currency in proportion to the excess.

It has been stated that every depreciation of the circulating medium, by whatever means occasioned, must necessarily produce a corresponding effect upon all exchanges, and upon all prices. But as these are subject to great variations from other causes, the market price of bullion and the state of foreign exchanges have been selected, as furnishing in conjunction the most accurate criterion of the pure or depreciated state of a currency. If the depreciation is sufficiently considerable, it must in all cases be clearly discovered by these tests.

These general positions do not rest upon mere probability. They are consequences which necessarily result from the nature of the subjects to which they relate; and they have all the force and effect of demonstration. The application of these principles to the particular cases, which have been here considered, depends altogether upon reasoning of a different nature; and, as the conclusion is drawn from a long deduction of facts, there may be room for doubt as to particular inferences. Yet there appears on the whole to be such a concurrence of circumstances as to afford us all the assurance of which a subject, not capable of positive proof, will admit.

The principal steps and final result of this part of the argument may be thus shortly stated. — Since

February, 1797, the currency of Great Britain and Ireland has been carried on by a medium of exchange not possessing, and not truly representing, intrinsic value, and therefore capable of being depreciated by an excess of quantity. During the greater part of that time there have been the same variations in the market price of bullion, and in the state of the exchange, which ought, according to the above reasoning, to have taken place upon the supposition of a depreciated currency. Upon a reference to the several accounts of the amount of bank notes in circulation, it is found that precisely those circumstances which our theory would lead us to expect, have in reality happened; and that there has within the same period been a great and corresponding increase in the quantity of that currency. It is a fact which tends very strongly to illustrate and confirm the truth of this reasoning, that upon comparing the state of the exchange and of bullion with the amount of bank notes, it appears that the effects have been proportioned in a most remarkable degree to the supposed cause; — that every successive addition to the notes in circulation has increased those unfavourable appearances in the exchange and price of silver from whence a depreciation was inferred; and, on the other hand, that the occasional diminutions in the quantity of notes have had an evident tendency to restore the value of the currency by improving the exchange and depressing the high price of bullion. From these circumstances, and, above all, from the *permanent* effects which appear to have been produced upon the price of silver and the state of the exchange, notwithstanding all occasional causes of fluctuation, it has been inferred, upon strong grounds of probability, that since the restriction of payments in specie in February, 1797, and in consequence of that measure, the paper circulation both of Great Britain

and Ireland has exceeded its proper limits, and that the currencies of both those countries have undergone a certain degree of depreciation; a fact which, with regard to the currency of the latter, is proved by evidence still more decisive, and which is now acknowledged to be an evil that calls for parliamentary interference.

Though the depreciation of the English currency is not sufficient to produce an actual difference in value between gold coin and bank notes in the ordinary transactions of commerce; yet its effect, though less perceptible, is not the less real or certain; and it must have contributed, together with other causes, to that general increase of prices and that diminution in the value of money which have taken place within a few years. The inconveniences which have resulted from hence are universally felt and experienced. The public creditors and that numerous class of society, who subsist upon limited or stipulated incomes, are injured in their property; the faith of contracts is indirectly violated, and those alone escape loss who have the means of augmenting their revenue in the degree in which the value of money is reduced. Yet these evils are to a certain degree unavoidable, even in those cases where the currency remains in a state of the utmost purity. The precious metals themselves, though the best practical standard of value, are far short of perfect truth and accuracy. In process of time, and during a course of years, they are subject to great variations. From the necessary effect of additional taxes, and the greater expence of subsistence, all wages are gradually increased, and the same quantity of coin no longer represents the same portion of labour or commodities. That a great effect upon prices has been produced in this manner it is impossible to doubt. It is a fact much less certain, but by no means improbable, that a still further

depreciation is imperceptibly taking place in consequence of an actual addition to the precious metals by an increased supply from the American mines.* Whatever may be the true mode of accounting for this evil, the fact itself is certain, and it has been experienced in a most remarkable degree in our own time and country; yet, so long as it arose from natural and necessary causes, however it might be lamented, it was an inconvenience not admitting of any practical remedy. But the effect of the present restriction of payments in specie is to aggravate this great and unavoidable evil by direct legislative interference.

There may be some difference of opinion with respect to the force of this reasoning, as applied to the cases in question, or the degree of practical inconvenience which has been experienced in consequence of the restriction of cash payments; but it seems impossible after a full consideration of the facts which have been adduced in the course of this enquiry, to entertain any doubt respecting the general danger of an unlimited paper currency, or the injustice and impolicy of persevering any longer in that system.

A due regard to *general rules*, and especially to the great rules of property, forms a most important part of the duty of a legislator. They are the foundations of all private and political security; and the only means by which great principles can be effectually protected against rash speculation and hasty and in-

* The supposition of an increase in the general quantity of the precious metals is proposed only as a probable conjecture, founded upon the acknowledged fact of a great advance of prices throughout every part of Europe in very modern times. Perhaps the increased use of paper currency in different countries where it was till lately unknown, and other modes of economising specie, may have contributed to the same effect. It is to be recollected however that Dr. A. Smith, in considering the question of the increase of the precious metals with reference to the greater part of the last century, has maintained a different opinion.

considerate judgments. A strict adherence to these rules, and a deep sense of their value and importance, is the great characteristic which distinguishes civilized nations, and which marks the degree of political knowledge and improvement. It has in general distinguished the legislative proceedings of our own country, and may be justly regarded as one of the principal causes of our national prosperity and greatness. Yet a more extraordinary deviation from all general rules has never occurred than in that change in the system of our paper currency, which commenced in the Act of Suspension of 1797 and is still continued. A law to suspend the performance of contracts has been suffered to remain in force seven years, and has again been renewed for an indefinite period. A power has been committed to the Directors of the Bank, which is not entrusted by the Constitution even to the Executive Government; a power of regulating, in a certain degree, the standard of national currency, and of varying this standard at their pleasure. A precedent has been established, by which, upon any suggestion of temporary expediency, the whole personal property and monied interests of the country may be committed to the discretion of a commercial body, not responsible to the Legislature and not known to the Constitution.

To the public creditor the Act of Restriction is a positive, though perhaps not intentional, breach of parliamentary faith. The Act was passed for a particular purpose and upon a great emergency, without adverting to this important consequence of the measure. But the public faith was clearly violated by compelling the creditor to receive Bank notes in payment of those dividends which were contracted to be paid in specie. The injustice of the measure, though not less real, is less apparent towards the proprietors of stock resident in England and Ireland

where the dividends are received; because the same medium, by which the interest of the public debt is paid, is the standard of currency for those countries. But the loss which is incurred by the foreign holders of English and Irish stock is palpable and manifest. In consequence of the unfavourable exchange occasioned by the Restriction they suffer an annual loss upon their remittances which is equivalent to a tax on the dividends.

This extraordinary measure, which violates so many great principles of policy and justice, originated in temporary difficulties, and has been suffered to continue from mere inadvertence. Neither the Public nor the Legislature appear to have considered to what consequences such proceedings ultimately tend. Had Parliament been called upon to authorise any of those direct frauds upon the currency which have often disgraced arbitrary governments, had it been recommended to them to raise the denomination, or to diminish the value, of the current coin, there can be no doubt that such a proposal would have been rejected with indignation. Yet an abuse of the same nature has been established by law in this country. The power of reducing the value of the currency by a silent and gradual depreciation is more dangerous from the very circumstance of its being less direct and less exposed to observation.

The true interests of Government and the People are not really at variance. No advantage can be obtained by the former, under any emergency, from any change in the system of currency by which the Public is injured. After the first momentary relief, Government, so far from deriving any benefit from such violations of established rules, is obliged, like other consumers, to increase its expenses, to multiply its loans and taxes, and to adapt its revenue to the enhanced price of labour and commodities. But this

is only a small part of the evils that have uniformly been experienced by those nations which have had frequent recourse to such expedients. The abuse increases in strength, and a return to the former system is rendered more difficult by delay; public credit suffers, the revenue and resources fail, and what was at first a mere temporary accommodation becomes finally a permanent cause of national weakness and decay. The case which is here supposed is extreme; but every instance of a discretionary power, by which the currency may be depreciated, has this tendency and may ultimately produce these effects.

WHOEVER has seriously considered the evils of a depreciated currency and the various facts relating to the circulation of Great Britain and Ireland which have been advanced in the course of this work, must surely be convinced of the necessity of putting an end to the present system of legislative interference, and of taking some steps for restoring the currencies of the two countries to their just value. But in order that the remedy may be effectual, it is of the utmost importance that the measures which may be pursued on this subject should be adopted with great prudence and caution; that nothing rash or precipitate should be attempted; and that the renewal of payments in specie should be accompanied by such regulations in the system of our coinage and currency as may prevent a repetition of those embarrassments in the circulation of the country which materially contributed to the stoppage of the Bank in 1797.

The difficulty of returning to the system of payments in specie arises in a great degree from circumstances independent of the original cause of the disorder. Since February 1797 the Banks of England and Ireland have been enabled to extend their discounts in proportion to the increase of their notes

in circulation; and the merchants have therefore been led to expect the continuance of that extraordinary accommodation which they have enjoyed for so long a time. Whenever the Act of Restriction shall be discontinued, the Directors will be under the necessity of diminishing their discounts as a preparatory step to reducing the amount of their currency. But it is certain that great inconvenience and very serious and extensive commercial embarrassment (as has formerly been observed respecting the Irish Bank) might result from a too sudden reduction of the usual discounts; and it is no less obvious that a certain part of the present currency must be withdrawn; it being clear that the demand for specie upon the Bank, when it is opened for payment, will never cease so long as the market price of bullion continues above the mint price. The high price of bullion being produced by an excess of Bank paper, the whole surplus of that currency would be returned upon the Bank for gold as soon as it could be legally demanded.

In order therefore to raise the value of the currency to its proper standard, and at the same time to prevent commercial embarrassment by a sudden limitation of discounts, it will be necessary to use great caution; and to reduce, in the most gradual and almost imperceptible manner, the amount of the notes in circulation. The necessity of this caution makes it expedient that some step should be taken upon this subject without further delay. By persevering in the present system the evil is likely to be much aggravated, and the application of the remedy is rendered more difficult. A parliamentary investigation of the whole subject is evidently necessary, not for the purpose of an *immediate* repeal of the present Restriction, but for determining upon the period at which it is finally to cease, and for adopting those measures which will diminish or prevent the confusion that

might otherwise result from a sudden change in the system of currency.

After the quantity of Bank notes is gradually reduced within those limits which will restore the value of that currency to the par of the precious metals, the great cause of the demand for gold in preference to Bank notes will be removed, and the Bank may then resume its payments in specie without danger or apprehension. The merchants of London, who are deeply interested in supporting the credit of that public establishment, will still maintain the circulation of Bank paper, and will undoubtedly associate (if necessary) for that purpose. But as Bank notes are much more convenient than coin for all except very trifling payments, we may be assured that after the first demand for specie has been supplied the habit of receiving Bank notes will return, and that the public will remain satisfied with a paper currency for which it is known that gold may immediately be had in exchange.

The difficulty and inconvenience of providing a sufficient quantity of specie for this purpose would be much diminished by a revision of the coinage and a repeal of the laws which prohibit the exportation of the current coin. A complete review of this whole system is necessary in order to provide at all times a supply of specie adequate to the demands of the public, and (what is of still more importance) to prevent the necessity of having recourse to a renewal of the Restriction on any future emergency.

The regulations of the English mint were intended to give every encouragement to the increase of the coin, and have therefore provided that the whole expense of coinage without any deduction should be defrayed by Government. The person, who carries a certain quantity of gold or silver bullion to the mint, receives back precisely the same weight in the form

of coin. It was supposed that this liberality of the state would operate as a bounty on coinage; but the effects of the law are directly contrary to the original intention. For the same reasons that gratuitous services are generally worst performed, the state is seldom inclined to undertake any large coinage, of which the whole expense, without any means of reimbursement, must be borne by the public. Hence many difficulties are found to exist, which would not be experienced, if the coinage, as in some other countries, was a source of profit to government. The delays of the mint are so great that individuals seldom find it advantageous to send bullion to be coined even when the price of standard gold is low; the loss of interest being more than equivalent to the profit to be derived from the conversion of the metal into coin. There is consequently little inducement on the part of private individuals to add to the quantity of specie under those circumstances in which such an increase would be most natural.

But besides this inconvenience, the present regulation of the mint has the further disadvantage of causing the gold coin to be rated somewhat too low, and of creating a temptation to melt it down at times, when it would otherwise remain in the form of coin. From the superior convenience of coin for many purposes it seems reasonable to suppose that gold in that form is naturally more valuable than in bars or ingots; and the fact is proved by the higher price which Portugal pieces always bear in the market above standard gold which is of precisely the same value and purity. But in consequence of the regulations of the mint and of the laws prohibiting exportation, which will be afterwards mentioned, guineas have no advantage in the market above bullion, and are for some purposes less convenient; and are therefore in danger of being melted down whenever their number

exceeds that which is required for circulation. Hence it is to be inferred that the expense of coinage ought to be paid in the increased price of the coin, in the same manner as in other manufactures the skill and labour are charged in addition to the value of the materials. If this is not done and the coin is rated no higher than bullion, it may frequently be advantageous to melt it down, and when advantageous, it is impossible to be prevented by any law. A small seignorage or duty upon the coinage would produce a clear superiority of the metal in coin above an equal quantity in bullion, and, by removing the temptation to melt it down, would effectually prevent this evil. The seignorage ought to be sufficient to give the coin this value, and yet so moderate as not to encourage false coining; or, in other words, it ought to be as nearly equal as possible to the real expense incurred by the coinage.

The scarcity of coin, that is occasioned by this injudicious regulation of the mint, is much aggravated by the present laws respecting the exportation of the precious metals, in which there is the most obvious and manifest impolicy. The law permits gold and silver to be exported in bullion, but not in the form of coin. This prohibition, like almost every other legislative restraint on commercial freedom, is injurious to the public and defeats the object which it was intended to promote. Like the mint regulation which was meant as a bounty on coinage, it is the natural growth of the mercantile system, and was intended to increase the quantity of money in the country; but instead of augmenting, it permanently diminishes, the average quantity of current coin. At present, when the exchange is unfavourable and there is an excess of specie in England, guineas must be melted down in order to be exported without risk of seizure; and a re-coinage becomes necessary if

the currency should afterwards be deficient. If guineas could be legally exported in the same manner as Spanish dollars or Portugal coin, they would like them become regular articles of commerce, for which they would in many respects be more convenient than in bullion. Upon any sudden demand for gold coin in England guineas might in that case be procured at once from the Continent, and would indeed be found at all times in the hands of the bullion merchants of London in large quantities. At present as the use of guineas is confined very much to mere circulation, it is impossible that the quantity should ever much exceed what is just necessary for that purpose.

The repeal of this impolitic law, the establishment of a small seignorage on the coin, and perhaps some regulations of inferior importance in the department of the mint, would have the effect of securing a constant supply of gold coin, and would prevent those embarrassments arising from a want of currency which were felt at different times during the late war. Under the present system it is very difficult to supply the demands of the public for gold coin on those sudden emergencies, which are sure to arise in critical times and where there is a great paper currency. These difficulties produce a necessity on such occasions for great coinages, which ought naturally to be undertaken by the Bank. But this being attended with great inconvenience, and it being always probable that the gold which is coined on such occasions will shortly be melted down, the Directors are naturally averse to this measure; and choose rather to limit their discounts and restrain their issues of paper than to incur this expense. The sudden check to circulation, which this conduct of the Bank always occasions, has often produced very great embarrassment to the trade of London; and

the experience of these checks during the late war gave rise to several projects and speculations for increasing the quantity of circulating medium. It seems to have been supposed by the authors of these plans that the insecurity of the times prevented the Bank in those instances from affording the usual accommodations to the merchants; but except in the embarrassments of 1793 this does not appear to have been the fact. The limitation of discounts on other occasions seems to have arisen from the apprehension of an increased demand for specie which it would have been difficult immediately to satisfy. But if there was no legislative interference the demand for specie, as for any other commodity or article of use or convenience, would naturally produce its own supply. The scarcity which has been experienced may be attributed with great reason to the restrictive laws respecting the current coin, and would probably be removed by repealing those laws and establishing a system of entire commercial freedom upon that subject.

It would diminish the chance of a future scarcity of specie, if Portugal pieces were permitted to pass current for their intrinsic value, which ought for that purpose to be ascertained by public authority and declared by proclamation. The only solid objection to the use of foreign coins as currency, is the danger of their value diminishing by the standard of the foreign country being altered; but this is only a reason why such coins ought in no case to be made legal tender. At present Portugal coin is of the same purity as the standard gold of this kingdom. An alteration in their value would immediately be discovered, and the coin would be discredited by being refused for taxes and in the great payments made to Government. It may be proper in this place to remark that, in case of a return to the system

of payments in specie, the practice, which has prevailed in this country since the re-coinage of 1772 of receiving gold coin by weight ought to be strictly adhered to by the Bank and officers of Government; as the only effectual means of preserving the standard of currency and preventing the mischiefs of false coining.

In the general revision of the coinage which is here recommended it will be necessary also to advert to another subject of great importance which has lately engaged the public attention—the scarcity and debased state of the silver coin. This evil, which has been much aggravated by the effects of the Bank restriction, arises entirely from an error in the present system of coinage which has often been mentioned by commercial writers. The inaccuracy consists in a difference between the relative values of gold and silver as estimated in the market and at the mint. By the regulations of the latter silver is rated too low in proportion to gold, or in other words, twenty-one shillings of the standard of the mint, if melted down, are always worth more than the guinea to which they are supposed to be equivalent; and it has therefore been found impossible to retain any new issue of that coin in circulation. The silver coin in general use has long been of inferior value, consisting of pieces very much worn, and which have lost a considerable portion of their original weight. Since the increase in the price of silver occasioned by the depreciation of Bank notes it has become advantageous to melt down even this inferior coin; and a great part of the shillings formerly current have gradually disappeared. The place of the coin thus withdrawn would naturally be supplied by a counterfeit currency of inferior value; and this will certainly take place by degrees, if the present scarcity of silver coin continues. But there is always a difficulty at first in introducing

into circulation a coin which is visibly of worse quality than that to which the people have been accustomed; and it is to this difficulty that the present want of silver coin is in a great measure to be attributed. In consequence of this scarcity the Bank of England has lately been under the necessity of issuing at 5*s.* each dollars of which the intrinsic value is 4*s.* 6*d.*, and which passed in 1797 for 4*s.* 9*d.*; thus acknowledging by their own act the depreciation of their notes.

In Ireland where the depreciation, as we have seen, has been carried much further, the whole of the legal silver coin has entirely disappeared; and the circulation is supplied either by notes for small sums in silver or by base money coined for the purpose by dealers at a profit of from 40 to 50 per cent. The popular aversion to this base currency has given rise to the expedient of silver notes; and such is the scarcity of silver currency in Ireland that soon after the expiration of the temporary law which was passed to authorise these notes, it was found absolutely necessary, after a short experience, to renew the Act last session. It has not been thought prudent to issue dollars in Ireland to supply the want of current silver; but if the Irish Bank should follow the example of the Directors here, the dollars must be issued at an advance of more than 10 per cent. beyond their rate in England. They would scarcely remain in circulation under 6*s.* Irish currency or 5*s.* 6*d.* English.

This scarcity of silver coin arises entirely from the inattention of those officers of government, who have had the direction of the mint, to the change which has taken place in the relative values of the precious metals, during the course of the last century. If the annual produce of the gold and silver mines were always in a constant ratio, and the demand for these metals was not subject to any variation, it might be

inferred that an ounce of gold would at all times be worth the same number of ounces of silver. But without regarding the difference of supply occasioned by the variation in the produce of the mines, it must follow from the nature of things that the price of gold and silver, like that of all other commodities, will perpetually vary from a difference of demand; and that an ounce of gold will sometimes exchange for a greater, and sometimes for a less, quantity of silver. It is a well-known fact that since the discovery of America the value of silver compared with gold has fallen, and that an ounce of the latter, which before that period would only have been exchanged for twelve ounces of the former, will now purchase more than fourteen. There is reason also to believe that during the last century the value of silver in Europe as compared to gold has increased again, though in a small proportion. By the difference of value which is here spoken of, the reader is to understand that permanent change which is effected by some cause operating constantly and uniformly through a series of years, and not that daily fluctuation in the market price observable at London or any particular place, and which is generally slight and temporary.

But notwithstanding all reasoning *à priori* and all former experience on this subject, governments seem to have thought they could make that fixed and certain, which in its nature is fluctuating and variable. By coining both gold and silver and ordaining that a piece of gold coin should always be equivalent to so many pieces of silver; instead of one uniform measure of value they have in fact established two standards. Now however truly adjusted the proportions of pure metal might have been in the respective coins at the time when the standard was fixed, it was not to be expected that the same proportion should remain for any considerable length of time; and it is accordingly

found by experience that since the last regulation of the English mint, which took place about ninety years ago, (and in which, as we shall afterwards see, there was then some inaccuracy,) there has been a change in the value of the precious metals, which renders a new adjustment necessary. By the present regulations of the mint a pound troy of standard gold is coined into forty-four guineas and a half, and a pound of standard silver into sixty-two shillings. The ratio of gold to silver according to this estimate is as 1 to $15\frac{2}{10}$. But in the markets of Europe the true proportion is supposed to be nearly as 1 to $14\frac{1}{2}$; and therefore a guinea, which is estimated at twenty-one shillings of standard currency, is in reality worth only about twenty shillings of that coin.

In order therefore to remove the present temptation to melt down the silver coin, it is absolutely necessary to establish a new regulation at the mint, and to fix the relative values of gold and silver coin according to the proportions which those metals actually bear in the markets of Europe. The difficulty might at once be obviated by diminishing the quantity of pure metal in the silver coin; that is, by altering the present standard; which consists of eleven ounces two penny-weights of pure metal and eighteen penny-weights of alloy to the pound troy of silver; in the same manner as eleven ounces of pure metal and one ounce of alloy form the pound troy of standard gold. But these proportions have been found by experience to be most convenient for the purposes of coinage; and they have lately received the sanction of a Committee of the Royal Society, who have investigated this subject by the directions of the Privy Council *. The present standards of the two metals have been long established, and, to the honour of our

* Philosophical Transactions, 1803.

own Government, have been more constant and uniform than those of any other country. An innovation in this respect might be highly impolitic in a commercial point of view as well as inconvenient in other respects; and it is probable also that there are many practical objections to such a measure, of which a writer, who is only conversant with the theory of this subject, may not be sufficiently aware.

If the present standard of the two metals is continued, a question will arise whether the preference ought to be given to gold or silver as the measure of value; or in other words whether the value of the gold coin ought to be raised to correspond with the present market price of silver, or the silver coin should be degraded in order to be adjusted to the present standard of gold. The following arguments may be urged in considering the opposite sides of this question.

In favour of making silver the standard of currency, the example of Europe, the ancient practice of our own Government, and the greatest authorities who have treated upon this subject, may be alleged with great reason and propriety. In almost all the European nations silver is the measure of value, and in most countries the greater part of the currency consists of that metal, the gold coin being an article of convenience rather than of general use. In Great Britain the current money prior to 1797 consisted of gold. But by the ancient law silver was the only measure of value, and the only coin in which payments could be legally made. Even to this time accounts are kept in pounds sterling which refer to the silver currency. The present standard of silver was fixed early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth and has continued ever since. The gold coin which is comparatively of late introduction (our present guineas being first coined in the reign of Charles II.)

had originally an uncertain value, and was accepted upon such terms as were agreed upon between the parties. It was afterwards adjusted at different times to the value of the silver coin. Guineas were first issued at twenty shillings and their value was afterwards fixed in the reign of King William first at twenty-six and then at twenty-two shillings, according to the debased or pure state of the silver coinage.

In 1717 Sir Isaac Newton, then Master of the Mint, presented a Memorial to the Treasury, in which he explained the cause of the apparent high price of silver, and showed that it arose from the inaccuracy of the relative values of the two metals in the English mint. The guinea then passed current for 21*s.* 6*d.*; and he calculated from the market price of silver in Europe that it ought to be reduced to about 20*s.* 6*d.* This proposal, which was avowedly made to prevent the melting down of the silver coin, was not adopted in its full extent; but in consequence of the representation so made, the guinea was reduced by proclamation to 21*s.* It seems to have been intended to proceed to a further reduction when the effect of this alteration should have been tried; the propriety of this caution being suggested in express terms by the Memorial. Since the year 1717, when this change was made, there is every reason to believe that the market price of silver throughout Europe has increased, and the inaccuracy of the mint regulations is consequently greater than at the time of Sir Isaac Newton's proposal; but no further change in the mint regulations has since taken place.

The above arguments and the ancient practice of the mint may be stated as reasons why the standard of silver should be preferred to that of gold; which was the opinion not only of Sir Isaac Newton in the instance which has been mentioned, but also of Mr. Locke on the discussion of this question at the time

of the great coinage in 1695. If these opinions should be followed, it will be necessary, after having ascertained the exact sum in silver coin of standard weight and purity which the present guinea is intrinsically worth, which seems to be about 20*s*., to ordain that a guinea should pass in future for no more than that amount; and a legislative provision ought to be made for reviewing from time to time the relative values of gold and silver, and declaring by public authority the sum in silver money at which the guinea is to pass current.

But many reasons may be urged on the other hand, why the standard of gold ought now to be preferred to that of silver. Though all accounts have nominally been kept in silver, gold has been the real measure of value in England for the last century. It is legal tender for all payments, and by an Act passed in the present reign no debt beyond a limited amount can be paid in silver coin, except for its value by weight according to the mint price.* Gold is much more convenient for great payments; and the standard of that metal is much more easily maintained in common circulation than silver. The latter is of much smaller value; and where both metals are current, the power of exchanging a certain number of pieces for gold may keep up the value of a very inferior silver currency. For these reasons it would be impossible to introduce the general practice of taking silver coin by weight; the only mode, as has formerly been observed, by which the value and purity of any current coin can be effectually maintained. Gold

* By the statute 14 Geo. III. c. 42. reciting the worn and debased state of the silver coin it is enacted "that no tender of payment in silver money, exceeding 25*l*. at one time, shall be a sufficient tender in law for more than its value by weight at the rate of 5*s*. 2*d*. an ounce." Why the sum was so large or why the particular sum of 25*l*. was mentioned it is impossible to conjecture. For the reasons which are given in the preamble of the Act it ought not to have exceeded 1*l*.

therefore would still remain the practical standard, and the silver coin, like the present pound sterling, would have a value merely nominal.

One of the most important properties in a standard of currency is steadiness and uniformity of value. But there seems no reason to believe that the price of gold has fluctuated, or that its value has fallen, during the last century, more than that of silver, or that the latter metal has any advantage over gold in this respect.

A more important reason for adhering to gold as the standard of value still remains to be considered. For near a century at least, all agreements have been entered into, and all debts have been contracted in England upon the supposition of payments being made in the present gold coin. To alter the denomination of this coin by adjusting its value to the obsolete, and at present imaginary, standard of silver, would be an injury to debtors, and an advantage to creditors, of about 4 per cent. in all future payments. Such a measure would have the effect of violating the faith of all existing contracts; and would be liable to many of the objections with which the present depreciation of money, produced by the Bank restriction, has been justly charged. It has been the usual fault of governments and the general tendency of legislative interference on these subjects to reduce the value of the current coin; but injustice may be committed in an equal, though opposite, degree by *raising* the standard of currency; and for this reason no alteration ought ever to be made in the practical measure of value without very great and urgent necessity.

If the latter arguments should be thought more convincing, and the standard of gold should after due consideration be preferred by the Legislature, it will be necessary, in the proposed revision of the coinage, to enact that the quantity of silver in the present

shillings of the mint shall be diminished, and the pound troy of standard silver divided into a greater number of pieces corresponding to the increased value of that metal as compared with gold. For the purpose of the present Inquiry it is not necessary to decide this important question, or to determine which of the two alterations it would be most expedient to adopt. But as the discontinuance of the Bank restriction will render a new coinage necessary, and as circumstances evidently require an entire change in the regulations of the mint, it has been thought useful on the present occasion to give a short and general view of this question, and to call the attention of the public to a great and important defect in the system of the English coinage, which, though it is attended with many practical inconveniences, and is often mentioned in works that expressly treat upon this subject, is little known or understood by general readers.

APPENDIX.

THE Tables, which will be found at the end of this work, contain the monthly accounts of the course of exchange with Hamburg and of the market prices of standard silver for some years past, and of the amount of English Bank notes in circulation since February 1797. The accounts of the latter have been taken from the returns made to Parliament at different times by the Bank of England, and include the notes under five pounds. There have been only two returns of Irish Bank notes. That which was made in consequence of a motion during the session of 1803 is inserted at full length. The rates of exchange and prices of silver have been extracted from Lloyd's lists and the weekly returns of prices which are regularly printed in London. An early period in each month has in general been selected, except in a few instances when the account has been taken from the second week, in order to insert the price of silver, which was occasionally omitted in the first. Where the price of standard silver was omitted throughout the whole of the month, the price in the following tables has been computed from that of new dollars by adding 2*d.*, the real difference being 2½*d.* The prices of silver during the whole of the years 1800 and 1801 are computed in this manner.

By the par of exchange is meant *the precise equality between a given sum or portion of English money and the money of the foreign country into which it is exchanged, the weight and purity of the respective coins being considered.* It is mostly estimated in the standard money of the two countries in which accounts are usually kept, and is ascertained by an accurate examination of the real and intrinsic values of the two coins. Thus, when it is said that the par of London with Hamburg is about 35, it is to be understood that the

English pound sterling is equal to 35 schillings; and that the latter sum in the Bank or standard money of Hamburg contains precisely the same quantity of pure silver as the English pound sterling estimated by the standard of the mint.

As the par of exchange is estimated according to the standard of the respective coins, it follows that an alteration in the value of the current coin of either country must affect the state of the exchange. In such cases the par of the two countries is in reality altered; but where the disorder in the currency is supposed to be temporary, the same nominal par usually continues and is still employed in all computations of the exchange. A well-known example will make this intelligible. Prior to the re-coinage of 1772 a worn and degraded gold coin of which the intrinsic value was much below the standard of the mint was used for all payments in this country, and therefore the real value of the English pound sterling, as paid in that inferior currency, was reduced below 35 schillings of Hamburg money. In this case the average value of the degraded English coin computed in the Hamburg currency was the real par of the exchange between the two countries. But as the nominal par which referred to the mint standard was still continued, there was always an apparent balance against London. In the same manner the English currency having since the year 1798 been depreciated in different degrees by the effects of the Bank restriction, the real par of exchange since the year 1798 has fluctuated below the true standard and has differed at different times. But as the computation is still made upon the pound sterling the exchange has always appeared to be unfavourable.

The par with Hamburg has been stated to be about 35. The same par of the pound sterling with Dublin is 1*l.* 1*s.* 8*d.* Irish currency, in consequence of the English shilling being current there for 13*d.* Irish. According to this computation 100*l.* sterling is equal to 108*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* Irish; and the par of the two countries, for the sake of shortness and convenience, is called 8⅓. When the exchange is said to be above 18, which is the case at present, it is to be understood that a bill of exchange drawn at Dublin upon London for 100*l.*, which prior to 1797 cost upon an average 108*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* Irish, is now worth 118*l.* of that currency.

The exchange with Paris is computed in the French crown of three livres estimated at 29¼*d.* English money, which is the par between the two countries. The course of exchange with Paris from 1789 until all commercial intercourse was prevented by the late war has been inserted in these tables; principally as affording one of the strongest illustrations of the manner in which the exchange with a foreign country was affected, in the memorable instance of *assignats*, by a depreciated currency.

The mint price of silver is 5*s.* 2*d.* an ounce. But it ought to be observed that, in consequence of the error which has been remarked in the relative values of gold and silver as estimated at the English mint, silver is either rated too low or gold too high. The real price in the markets when purchased with gold is supposed to be 5*s.* 4*d.* or 5*s.* 5*d.* Assuming the latter to be the real market price of silver, and 5*s.* 8*d.* (as appears from these tables) to have been the average market price in England since the restriction of 1797, it may be inferred that by the effects of that measure the currency of this country has been depreciated rather more than 5 per cent., a conclusion which appears to be justified by other circumstances.

NOTE

ON THE EFFECTS OF THE TRADE WITH THE EAST INDIES IN PRODUCING A FAVOURABLE EXCHANGE WITH THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE.

THE observations upon the manner in which the exchange between this country and other parts of Europe is affected by the Indian commerce, were introduced for the purpose of strengthening the general argument founded on the permanently unfavourable exchange since 1798, and of showing that, notwithstanding the opinions of some distinguished writers, there might be cases in which the balance of trade and the course of exchange might afford important conclusions respecting the state of commerce. On the principles of Mr. Hume and Dr. A. Smith it must be admitted to be the general rule, that there can be no constant or uniform balance in favour of any particular country; and that the exchange between any two places is naturally at par, and, however it may occasionally fluctuate, is brought upon an average to a state of perfect equality. This is inferred from the evident absurdity of that constant accumulation of the precious metals, which is regarded by the partisans of the mercantile system as the only test of commercial wealth and prosperity. But it occurred to the Author, in considering the present subject, and adverting to the singular fact of a uniform balance in favour of Great Britain with the greater part of Europe, that there might be exceptions to this general rule; and that the peculiar circumstances of a country which carries on a great trade by means of the precious metals, and has a constant demand for them for this purpose, would be found to furnish such an exception. A very liberal and intelligent critic, who has done great honour to the present Work by the attention which he has bestowed upon it in the Edinburgh Review, No. 4., p. 418., has controverted this opinion. "Bullion," he says, "is a commodity for which like every other there is a varying demand, and which exactly like any other may enter the catalogue either of exports or imports; and this exportation or importation of bullion will not affect the course of exchange in a different

way from the exportation or importation of other commodities. The real course of exchange between two countries depends upon the state of their reciprocal credits and debts."—"Provided the whole exports are no more than equal during a given period of time to the whole imports, the exchange will be at par, although a great part, the greater part, or even the whole of those imports may have consisted of bullion." This opinion is again asserted by the same critics in their examination of Mr. Wheatley's *Remarks on Currency and Commerce.*—Edinb. Review, No. 5., p. 238. In considering the question whether an excess of the precious metals in any country can affect the balance of trade or produce an unfavourable exchange, it is said, "Exchange might be at par while nothing but goods on one side was given for money on the other, and the bills against a nation might bear a premium while it exported nothing but bullion. The difference between the exports and imports, from whatever cause it arises, must in every case constitute the difference between the value of the bills of two nations trading together." As the subject is in some respects new and important, and as the opinion of these writers is entitled to great respect for many obvious reasons, but particularly on account of their very just and laudable attention to works of political economy, it may be proper to enter a little into the detail of this question, and to state the reasons which have induced the Author, after a full consideration of the Reviewer's arguments, to adhere to his former opinion.

The objection made by the Reviewers is this—that bullion, when it is imported in consequence of an effective demand, does not influence the balance of trade in any other manner than a common commodity; by which they must be understood to assert that the import of gold or silver to answer a commercial demand is always produced by an original order for that purpose, and is not a consequence of the abundance and cheapness of bills of exchange upon the country in which bullion is plentiful. This proposition appears to be open to many objections; and whether we consider the particular manner in which the bullion trade is carried on, and the division of labour which experience has introduced into that branch of commerce, or the general result and effect of a permanent demand for the precious metals, it seems equally

certain that a steady influx of bullion will have the necessary effect of rendering the exchange favourable.

The invention of bills of exchange is the greatest improvement that has ever taken place in the intercourse of nations; and, like money in the ordinary exchanges between individuals, relieves the merchant in one case from the necessity of bartering the cargo of his vessel, and the individual, in the other, from exchanging the actual produce of his industry for some other commodity. Since bills of exchange have been in use they have served as the medium of exchange and representatives of value in all commercial transactions; and the trade of bullion is no longer carried on by the general merchant who deals in ordinary commodities, but by the bullion merchant whose peculiar business it is to adapt the supply of the precious metals to the demand, to bring them from those places where they are cheap to others where they are dear, and thus to reduce the value of gold and silver in all countries as nearly as possible to one level. When the London merchant consigns a cargo of English merchandise to his correspondent in Spain, he draws bills for the value on his agent in that country. These bills are sent into the exchange market, and pass through the intermediate hands of bankers and brokers, forming in this manner a part of the great aggregate of the bill transactions between the two countries. When the amount of the debts due from Spain for the produce of British exports is greater than the amount of debts due by England for Spanish merchandise, it will follow that in consequence of the great supply of bills of exchange on Spain those bills must fall in their value on the exchange of London; and on the other hand the scarcity of bills on London must occasion a high price on the exchange of Cadiz. The bullion merchant, who knows the demand for silver in this country, is naturally the purchaser of bills on those places from whence it is to be procured; and whenever the difference between the market price of bills and the sum for which they are drawn is sufficient to pay him the cost of transport, price of insurance, and reasonable profit of trade, he buys up bills on Spain, and by means of these bills procures an actual importation of bullion into this country. For example; supposing the market price of a bill on Spain for a sum, which is of the intrinsic value of 100*l.* sterling, to

be 94*l.* and the cost and risk of importing that sum from Spain to be equal to 4*l.*, there will remain 2*l.* clear profit to the bullion merchant. If that should not be sufficient, he forbears purchasing until the accumulation of bills in the market reduces their price to such a sum as shall afford a reasonable profit. Supposing this to be the manner in which the bullion trade is carried on, and that it is entirely distinct from that of the general merchant (of which there seems to be no doubt), it is to be inferred that where from peculiar circumstances the commerce between two countries consists of the actual transfer of a considerable proportion of specie on one side, and of general merchandise on the other, the rate of exchange must in the ordinary course of things be unfavourable to the country exporting the specie. If the exchange continued at par there would be no profit to the dealers in bullion, and no actual importation could take place until the reduction in the price of bills produced a profit sufficient to repay all necessary expenses.

The importation and exportation of bullion is a peculiar and distinct branch of commerce with which common merchants, who deal in the wines and ordinary produce of Spain and Portugal, have no concern. The general merchant is altogether ignorant of this particular trade, and is consequently unwilling to purchase so valuable a commodity in which he has no skill, and to engage in a speculation, in which a very slight error, either in the quality and purity of the metal, or in his judgment relative to the state of the bullion market, would expose him to considerable loss. If however, in any instance, the general merchant should engage in this trade, and in consequence of the demand for bullion should import it on his own account, he would become a dealer in bills of exchange on Spain, which he would naturally purchase when it was advantageous so to do in preference to exporting goods to the same amount. It is to be observed also that the abundance of specie in Spain must operate as an inducement to Spanish merchants to give larger orders for goods, for which bills must be drawn by England on that country; and there is consequently a natural accumulation of such bills in the English market. But upon the supposition of the bullion trade being carried on by general merchants, a bill or debt due in Spain would sell on the

exchange of London still cheaper than at present, because the profits of the trade when conducted by the general merchant must be higher. The division of labour in this as in every other instance diminishes prices and reduces the expense of mercantile transactions.

Bullion, like all other commodities, is naturally cheapest in the place where it is produced, because it is there most abundant; and when it is exported, the price must be advanced sufficiently to pay the cost of transport, the risk, and every expense attending the actual transfer. The same cause operates in the price of all manufactured goods, which are cheaper at the manufactory and dearer in proportion to the distance and difficulty of transport. But bullion differs from other commodities in this respect, that it is the currency of nations, and will any where pay a debt which other goods will not. If Spain is regularly the debtor to England, and if bullion is constantly sent for the payment of those debts, and is always withdrawn from the bad market of Spain to seek the good market of England, it must follow that a bill of exchange, or order for a sum containing as much pure silver as is coined into 100*l.* sterling to be paid in Spain, will sell in London for only 95*l.* or 96*l.*; that is, such a proportion will be deducted from the amount of the bill as is equivalent to the cost of transport. This necessary expense is increased by the Spanish and Portuguese laws, which prohibit the exportation of bullion. If the difficulty of evading the vigilance of the custom-houses was so much increased as to render the attempt to export bullion extremely hazardous, the value of the precious metals would be still further depreciated in Spain by their greater abundance, until the profit of the contraband trade of exporting specie was at length sufficiently advanced to repay the dangers and the risk of seizure.

The Edinburgh Reviewers, admitting the fact of a generally favourable exchange with the Continent, consider the balance as being partly real and partly apparent. So far as it is real they think it is produced by the long credit allowed by the English merchants, and they attribute so much as is only apparent to the excellent state of our gold coin. But these causes are evidently insufficient to explain the difficulty, or to account for a permanent and uniform balance in favour of this country. The credit, which is given by the English

merchants, occasions a small advance on the price of the goods, and therefore increases the value of the exports. But such an increase, when regular and uniform, is always paid for by an additional amount of imports, and cannot, upon any intelligible principles, permanently affect the exchange. Long credit is always given by a rich country where the rate of interest and profits of trade are low, to a poor country where they are very high. The goods are sold at an advanced price, it being an accommodation to the poorer nation to pay an advance, of perhaps 10 per cent., on a whole year's credit rather than a smaller sum at a shorter date, because the merchants of the latter country in consequence of the high profits of trade can employ their capital to greater advantage. For the same reason it is advantageous to the wealthy nation to give a long credit on an advanced price of their goods; because that small advance in price is more than equivalent to the moderate profits of trade and interest of money at home. But that such a course of dealing will not produce any permanent balance in favour of the country, which grants the accommodation, is evident from the example of the trade with Ireland, in which long credit has always been given; yet prior to the Restriction of 1797 the exchange upon an average was at par between the two countries. For the same reasons, in the North American trade very long credit is allowed; yet the exchange is not supposed on the whole to be much in favour of London. If this is the case in a small degree, it is probably occasioned by some contraband communication between the Southern States and the Spanish province of Mexico; in consequence of which a certain small portion of the precious metals may flow into Great Britain by that channel.

The state of the gold currency since the re-coinage of 1772 must be admitted to have had a favourable effect on the exchange with those countries where the coin has been in a worn and inferior state. But the degree in which this cause has influenced the balance of trade, seems to be altogether insufficient to account for the whole of the effect produced; and it could have no influence whatever upon the exchange with some of the greatest markets of Europe; namely, with Hamburg and Amsterdam, where the payments are in bank money, or with Spain, where the current coin is always in a very pure state.

TABLES

OF THE COURSE OF EXCHANGE, AND PRICE OF SILVER, FROM 1789 INCLUSIVE.

	Hamburg.	Paris.	Dublin.	Standard Silver per Ounce.	
				s.	*d.*
1789.					
January 6.	34 10	28 5/8	8 1/2	5	2
February 3.	35	28 1/2	9	5	2
March 3.	35 1	28 1/16	9 1/8	5	2
April 3.	35 5	28 1/4	9 1/8	5	2
May 1.	35 6	28 1/4	8 1/4	5	3 1/4
June 2.	35 7	27 7/8	8	5	3 1/4
July 2.	35 7	27 9/16	8 1/2	5	3
August 4.	35 3	27 3/4	8 3/8	5	2 1/4
September 1.	35 5	27 3/4	7 3/4	5	2 1/4
October 2.	35 3	27 1/2	8	5	2 1/4
November 3.	35 1	27 1/16	8	5	2 1/4
December 1.	35	26 1/2	8 1/4	5	2 1/4
1790.					
January 1.	35	27 3/8	8 1/4	5	2 1/2
February 2.	34 11	26 1/16	8 3/8	5	2 1/2
March 2.	35 2	26 3/8	8 1/2	5	2 1/2
April 2.	35 4	25 1/4	8 3/4	5	3 1/2
May 4.	35 4	26 1/2	8 1/4	5	3 1/4
June 1.	35 4	27	8 1/4	5	3 1/4
July 2.	35 7	26 1/2	8 1/2	5	3
August 3.	35 7	26 3/4	8 1/8	5	3
September 3.	35 6	26 3/8	8 5/8	5	2 1/2
October 1.	35 8	25	8	5	2 1/2
November 2.	35 7	25 1/2	8 1/4	5	2 1/2
December 3.	35 6	25 5/8	8 1/8	5	2 1/2
1791.					
January 4.	35 6	25 1/2	8 1/4	5	3
February 1.	35 8	24 7/8	8 3/4	5	3
March 1.	35 10	25 1/4	8 5/8	5	3
April 1.	35	24 7/16	8 1/4	5	3 1/4
May 3.	35 11	24 1/16	8 3/8	5	3 1/4
June 3.	35 11	23 1/4	8 1/4	5	2 3/4
July 1.	35 10	22 3/8	8 1/2	5	2 3/4
August 2.	35 10	23 1/4	9	5	2 1/4
September 2.	35 6	22 7/8	8 1/4	5	2 1/4
October 4.	35 5	23 1/16	8 3/8	5	3
November 1.	35 2	22 7/8	8 1/4	5	3 1/2
December 2.	35 1	21 3/4	8 1/8	5	3 1/2

	Hamburg.	Paris.	Dublin.	Standard Silver. per Ounce.
1792.				s. d.
January 3.	34 6	19¼	8¾	5 4
February 3.	34 6	17⅜	8¾	5 4
March 2.	34 6	15¼	8½	5 4½
April 3.	34 5	17¼	8¼	5 5
May 1.	34 3	17½	8¼	5 5¼
June 1.	34 4	17½	8⅝	5 6
July 3.	34 5	18	9	5 6
August 3.	34 4	17¼	8⅞	5 5
September 4.	34	19¾	8⅝	5 5
October 2.	34 6	18¼	8¼	5 5
November 2.	34 3	19¾	8¼	5 5
December 4.	35 2	19¾	8⅜	5 4¾
1793.				
January 1.	35 4	17	8¼	5 4⅝
February 1.	35 6	14¾	8¾	5 5
March 1.	36 7	15	9¼	5 2½
April 2.	37 6	12	9½	5 2½
May 3.	37 6	*N.B.* There	10½	5 2½
June 4.	37 4	was no ex-	10½	5 1½
July 2.	37 2	change with	10½	5 1
August 2.	35 6	Paris after	10	5 1
September 3.	36	April 1793	9¼	5 1½
October 1.	35 9	during the	9	5 1½
November 1.	35 3	remainder of	8½	5 1½
December 3.	35 4	the war.	8⅝	

	Hamburg.	Dublin.	Standard Silver per Ounce.
1794.			s. d.
January 7.	35 10	8½	5 1½
February 4.	36 1	9	5 1¼
March 4.	36 4	8½	5 1
April 1.	36 5	8	5 1
May 2.	36 7	8⅜	5 1¼
June 3.	34 7	8⅝	5 2
July 1.	35 6	8⅝	5 2
August 1.	35 10	8⅝	5 1
September 2.	35	8⅝	5 1
October 3.	35 5	8¼	5 1
November 4.	34 5	8¼	5 1
December 2.	35	8¼	5 2

	Hamburg.	Dublin.	Standard Silver per Ounce.
1795.			s. d.
January 2.	34 6	$8\frac{5}{11}$	5 $2\frac{1}{4}$
February 3.	36	$8\frac{1}{4}$	5 1
March 3.	35 10	$8\frac{1}{2}$	5 1
April 3.	35 4	$8\frac{1}{2}$	5 1
May 1.	34 4	$8\frac{1}{2}$	5 1
June 2.	33 6	$8\frac{3}{4}$	5 2
July 3.	32 10	$8\frac{3}{4}$	5 $3\frac{1}{2}$
August 4.	32 4	$8\frac{1}{2}$	5 4
September 1.	32 6	$8\frac{5}{8}$	5 $5\frac{1}{2}$
October 2.	32 10	8	5 $5\frac{1}{2}$
November 3.	32 10	$8\frac{1}{4}$	5 5
December 1.	33 2	$8\frac{3}{8}$	5 $5\frac{1}{2}$
1796.			
January 1.	32 7	$8\frac{1}{2}$	5 $5\frac{1}{2}$
February 2.	33 6	$9\frac{1}{4}$	5 5
March 4.	33 2	9	5 5
April 5.	34 8	$9\frac{1}{2}$	5 $4\frac{1}{2}$
May 3.	33 10	9	5 5
June 3.	34	10	5 4
July 1.	33 7	$9\frac{7}{11}$	5 6
August 5.	33 11	$10\frac{1}{4}$	5 5
September 2.	33 7	$10\frac{1}{4}$	5 $3\frac{1}{2}$
October 4.	34	$10\frac{1}{4}$	5 4
November 4.	34 6	$10\frac{1}{4}$	5 $3\frac{1}{2}$
December 9.	34 10	$10\frac{1}{4}$	5 5

	Hamburg.	Dublin.	Standard Silver.	English Bank Notes.
1797.			s. d.	£
January 6.	35 6	$10\frac{1}{4}$	5 4	
February 3.	35 2	$8\frac{3}{4}$	5 4	
March 10.	35 8	$9\frac{1}{4}$	5 5	
April 7.	36 8	$6\frac{1}{2}$	5 6	
May 9.	36 2	$8\frac{1}{2}$	5 6	11,103,880
June 9.	36 4	$8\frac{1}{4}$	5 $1\frac{1}{2}$	
July 7.	36 9	$7\frac{3}{4}$	5 $1\frac{1}{2}$	
August 4.	36 7	$7\frac{3}{4}$	5 $1\frac{1}{2}$	10,828,880
September 5.	37 10	7	5 1	
October 6.	37 8	$7\frac{1}{4}$	5 $0\frac{1}{2}$	
November 7.	37 10	$7\frac{1}{4}$	5 $0\frac{1}{2}$	11,642,400
December 5.	38 3	7	5 $0\frac{1}{2}$	

	Hamburg.	Dublin.	Standard Silver.		English Bank Notes.
			s.	*d.*	£
1798.					
January 9.	37 11	$8\frac{5}{6}$	5	$0\frac{1}{2}$	
February 9.	37 8	9	5	0	13,043,480
March 9.	37 7	$9\frac{1}{4}$	5	$1\frac{1}{2}$	
April 10.	37 8	9	5	$1\frac{1}{2}$	
May 8.	37 3	$9\frac{1}{4}$	5	$1\frac{1}{2}$	13,224,440
June 8.	37 6	$9\frac{1}{2}$	5	1	
July 10.	37 10	$9\frac{3}{4}$	5	1	
August 7.	37 6	8	5	1	12,115,640
September 7.	37 6	$8\frac{3}{4}$	5	1	
October 9.	37 10	9	5	$0\frac{1}{2}$	
November 6.	37 10	$9\frac{1}{4}$	5	$0\frac{1}{2}$	12,452,070
December 11.	37 3	$9\frac{1}{4}$	5	$0\frac{1}{2}$	
1799.					
January 8.	37 8	10	5	$2\frac{1}{2}$	
February 8.	37 8	$9\frac{1}{4}$	5	3	13,212,460
March 8.	37 5	$9\frac{7}{8}$	5	3	
April 5.	37 4	11	5	3	
May 10.	35 6	10	5	$3\frac{1}{2}$	13,720,260
June 11.	35 6	$11\frac{1}{4}$	5	5	
July 5.	35 10	$11\frac{3}{4}$	5	7	
August 9.	34 6	$11\frac{5}{8}$	5	7	13,759,940
September 10.	32 9	$11\frac{3}{4}$	5	8	
October 8.	32	12	5	8	
November 12.	32 6	$12\frac{1}{2}$	5	8	14,006,960
December 3.	32	$14\frac{1}{4}$	5	8	
1800.					
January 7.	32	$13\frac{1}{2}$	5	$6\frac{1}{2}$	
February 11.	30 6	$12\frac{1}{4}$	5	8	15,120,060
March 11.	31	12	5	$9\frac{1}{2}$	
April 10.	31 6	$11\frac{1}{4}$	5	$9\frac{1}{2}$	
May 13.	32 3	$11\frac{3}{4}$	5	$9\frac{1}{2}$	15,213,520
June 6.	31 10	$10\frac{3}{4}$	5	$9\frac{1}{2}$	
July 11.	32 3	$10\frac{1}{4}$	5	$9\frac{1}{2}$	
August 12.	32 1	$11\frac{1}{4}$	5	9	15,230,410
September 9.	32	$12\frac{1}{4}$	5	9	
October 10.	32 1	$10\frac{1}{8}$	5	9	
November 14.	31 10	$10\frac{5}{8}$	5	9	15,450,970
December 9.	30 10	$10\frac{1}{2}$	5	9	
1801.					
January 6.	29 10	11	5	10	
February 6.	31 10	$12\frac{1}{4}$	5	11*	16,365,206
March 10.	31 9	$12\frac{1}{2}$	6	0	
April 10.	31 4	14	6	1	

	Hamburg.	Dublin.	Standard Silver.	English Bank Notes.
1801.			*s.* *d.*	
May 8.	31 9	14	6 1	No account
June 9.	31 4	13½	6 0	of the Bank
July 7.	31 8	16	6 0	notes in circu-
August 7.	31 4	14	6 0	lation appears
September 4.	31 9	14	6 0	to have been
October 6.	32 6	13½	6 0	presented for
November 6.	32 5	11	5 11	this year sub-
December 11.	31 10	11	6 0½	sequent to March 25.
1802.				
January 8.	32	11½	6 0½	
February 5.	32	12	5 11½	£
March 5.	32 3	12½	5 11½	15,956,016.
April 9.	33 4	13	5 9½	
May 7.	32 7	11½	5 9½	
June 8.	33	12½	5 9½	16,747,300
July 6.	33 1	12¾	5 6½	
August 10.	33	11½	5 6½	
September 7.	33 3	12¼	5 6	16,141,636
October 1.	33 5	12	5 6	
November 5.	33 5	12	5 6½	
December 3.	34	12	5 7	15,838,410

	Bank of England Notes.	Silver in Bars.	Hamburg.	Dublin.	Bank of Ireland Notes.
1803.		*s.* *d.*			
January 25.	£	5 7	34 3	13	£
February 25.	15,325,080	5 7½	34 4	13	2,683,448
March 25.	15,210,290	5 8	34 10	14	2,599,759
April 26.	16,316,540	5 8	34 4	14	2,688,289
May 27.	15,875,960	5 8	34 3	15	2,722,401
June 24.	15,614,160	5 7	34 9	14½	2,567,202
July 26.	17,254,100	5 5	34	16½	2,855,801
August 26.	16,451,180	5 6	32 10	18	2,919,736
September 27.	15,935,080	5 6½	33 8	16	2,752,370
October 25.	17,171,930	5 7½	34 10	15½	2,803,364
November 25.	17,931,930	5 8	34 10	17	2,911,628
December 27.		5 8½	34 10	18	

ACCOUNT OF THE AMOUNT OF BANK OF IRELAND NOTES IN CIRCULATION AT DIFFERENT PERIODS (INCLUDING BILLS UNDER 5*l.*) PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS, PURSUANT TO AN ORDER DATED FEBRUARY, 1803.

		£	Exchange on Dublin.
1797.			
January	1.	621,917	10¼
April	1.	737,268	6½
June	1.	808,612	8¼
September	1.	959,999	7
1801.			
April	1.	2,266,471	14
May	1.	2,405,214	13½
June	1.	2,350,012	13½
1802.			
June	1.	2,678,980	12¼
August	1.	2,628,958	11½
October	1.	2,528,951	12
December	1.	2,530,867	12
1803.			
February	1.	2,633,864	13

ON THE

CONDUCT OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

TOWARDS THE

CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

"The march of the human mind is slow. It was not until after two hundred years discovered that, by an eternal law, Providence had decreed vexation to violence." — *Burke's Speech on Conciliation with America.*

[PUBLISHED IN 1807.]

THOUGHTS

ON THE

CATHOLIC QUESTION.

THAT the situation of the British empire is critical and precarious beyond all former example, is but too evident from the alarming train of events which, since the renewal of the war, have prepared and confirmed the entire subjugation of the Continent, and established the decided superiority of France over the Continent of Europe. Our dangers, in every direction, are undoubtedly great and unparalleled in the British history; but if, from the variety of perils with which we are surrounded, a political observer was called upon to select that which, above all others, demands our most anxious consideration, and threatens the most fatal consequences, if neglected; he could hardly fail to point out the situation of Ireland, and the condition of the great majority of the population of that island. If this apprehension shall appear to be well founded; if party animosity and religious distinctions have really alienated, in any considerable degree, the affections of the great body of the Irish nation from the cause of Great Britain, that alarm is in no degree abated when we consider the tone of public opinion in England, on that most important subject.

It might have been expected that those who were removed to some distance from the scene, would have remained unprejudiced and dispassionate in the dis-

pute; and that the Irish nation might have appealed with confidence to the Imperial parliament, where, according to the prediction of the minister who advised and effected the union, "their cause would finally be decided by a legislature removed from local prejudices and party animosity." In any other cause, the English nation, with that characteristic love of justice by which it is distinguished, would have hastened to put an end to all real and permanent causes of dissatisfaction and complaint; but unfortunately, in this instance, the Roman Catholic religion is involved in the discussion.

At that name, the antiquated fears which prevailed at the latter end of the 17th, and beginning of the 18th century, are revived in all their force; and it requires an effort of the understanding to be convinced that the causes which once made the Catholic religion the well-founded object of our alarms, have long since ceased to exist.

Unfortunately, the secret advisers of the King prevailed on his Majesty to dismiss his late servants, who, deeply impressed with the awful situation of the empire, were proceeding, in the most gradual and cautious manner, to compose the differences, and allay the discontents, which have so long existed in Ireland, by conciliating the Roman Catholic gentry on the advantageous terms of enabling them by law to hold military commissions, and tolerating them in the exercise of their religion in the army and navy. The ministers who have lately succeeded them, have endeavoured, at the commencement of their career, to revive the flames of religious discord; and, with an infatuation which forebodes the ruin of their country, have excited a senseless cry, which, though it has fortunately failed to produce those extremities of outrage and violence which are the usual effects of popular passions so powerfully inflamed, yet must

infallibly have increased the alienation of the catholics of Ireland by this new proof of hostility on the part of the English government and people.

The Irish catholics have lately seen an able and vigilant administration dismissed by their sovereign, for no other fault than the introduction of a bill to enable the King to accept the services of all his subjects, and to remove those incapacities which now prevent the catholic officers from advancing in the army, and receiving the reward of their services. They must be convinced by late events, that there exists a spirit and a temper in the British nation (to which the present ministers have so greatly contributed) which, so long as it continues, must ever be fatal to their claims.

Under these circumstances, it may be useful to consider what was the origin of the proscription of the Roman Catholic religion, and of the legal disabilities imposed on the members of that church. It was not that the Catholic religion was in its nature found hostile to the principles of political liberty, or to a popular form of government, or that it was adverse to the progress of intellectual improvement. These are reasons of too abstract a nature to have had much influence in the framing of laws; and are of much too philosophical a cast to obtain the real approbation of many of those who are now most forward in denouncing, while they imitate, the intolerant principles of the Catholic religion. The fact is, that these laws originated entirely from accidental and temporary circumstances, and were found necessary to conciliate the prejudices, and provide against the supposed dangers of the times in which they were produced. The Catholic religion was proscribed in consequence of the bigoted attempts of James II. to subvert the constitution and religion of the kingdom, and to establish popery on the ruins of the established church. That

misguided and tyrannical prince had associated the cause of his religion and of despotism; and the friends of freedom perhaps found it necessary to direct their efforts against both, and to unite the enemies of popery and tyranny in the glorious struggle in which they were engaged.

It seems to have escaped the attention of those who consider the coronation oath in the light of a fundamental and constitutional act, for the purpose of excluding Catholics from the legislature, that, at the time of the accession of King William, when the present oath was framed, Roman Catholic peers and commoners sat and voted in the Irish parliament. By what rule, then, is it possible to consider this oath as an engagement to maintain restrictions which did not then exist; and how can it be maintained that a compact, to which the King consented as head of the executive government, imposed upon him an obligation to refuse his royal sanction to any measure which the legislature may judge essential to the union and security of the empire? The nature of the obligation of the coronation oath, is to be understood by referring to the circumstances of the times, and to the dangers against which it was intended to provide. It was intended to establish a safeguard against the repetition of the designs of a misguided bigot, from whose violent attacks the nation had then recently escaped; and the obligation must be understood in the sense, and according to the intention, of those who imposed it. It was framed for the purpose of excluding from the throne the princes of the house of Stuart, whose principles, and whose religion, were found by long experience to be incompatible with the liberty of the subject.

The object of the test and corporation acts was entirely similar. The act of the 30th of Charles II. "for the more effectually preserving the King's person

and government by disabling papists from sitting in either house of parliament," was passed in the latter end of that reign; about the same period when the Exclusion Bill to prevent the succession of the Duke of York was pressed with so much eagerness by the House of Commons.—It has already been remarked that the exclusion of Catholics from the legislature (so far as relates to Ireland) was subsequent to the present coronation oath; and therefore if it was possible to admit that the oath was restrictive upon the parliament and the people, it could by no ingenuity of construction be made to apply to laws which were not enacted when the oath itself was framed.

It appears then most clearly, upon referring to the history of those times, that these acts of precaution directed against the Roman Catholics, were passed with the sole intention of averting the dangers which then threatened the kingdom from the attempts of King James and his adherents to establish the Roman Catholic religion, and from the efforts of the latter to restore the deposed monarch. He brought, perhaps justly, on the members of his church that long train of exclusions and penalties, which in many essential points remained unrepealed after the lapse of a century of persecution.

Since the enactment of this intolerant code, the circumstances of the world, and the politics of Europe, are entirely altered. The diminished power and influence of the church of Rome; the total extinction of the exiled family of the Stuarts; in fine, every reason which formerly existed for marking out the Roman Catholics as objects of suspicion and alarm, have long since ceased. The accidental circumstances, which alone placed the followers of that religion in a state of hostility with a Protestant sovereign, have now not even the shadow of an existence. Our present weakness consists in the means

employed as a security against former dangers and in the very acts of precaution which were once thought necessary for our defence. Those measures which were calculated for a different order and state of things, and which in former times perhaps were acts of prudence and good policy, in other times, and under other circumstances, may be pregnant with calamity and ruin.

The Irish Catholics are not now, as they formerly were, a contemptible and ignorant rabble, without any mixture of persons of education or talents; their body at this moment contains four millions of his Majesty's subjects, many of them filling the most respectable stations in the community, deeply penetrated with a sense of the injustice which they suffer, demanding redress by every constitutional means, and pursuing this great object with constancy and resolution. In this state of mind there is too much reason to apprehend that long-continued denial of just claims will produce at best a coldness and apathy to that cause in which Great Britain and every other independent state in Europe is so deeply involved. The hopeless state of their cause, and the despair of succeeding by legal and constitutional means, has a tendency to alienate the affections of the people of Ireland, and to indispose them towards those exertions which the dangers of the country render necessary.

It deserves also to be considered that the complaints of the people of Ireland are in no degree the effects of sudden caprice or momentary resentment: they proceed, on the contrary, from a deep feeling of political abasement and oppression, and are the result of a system of government uniformly acted upon from the first establishment of English influence to the present moment. If we direct our attention in the most cursory manner to any part of the Irish history, we perceive the same exclusive spirit, the same impolitic

design, openly avowed of keeping the English race separate and distinct from their fellow subjects, and uncontaminated by any mixture or alliance with the Irish.

We find in an early period of the Irish history, that ineffectual applications were made by the native inhabitants to be allowed to become subjects of the King, instead of the oppressed vassals of their chiefs. They made a proposition to Edward I. of giving 8000 marks, and raising a body of troops as the price of a general denization. Edward I. though willing to accede, was prevented by his Irish government and the aristocracy from accepting this offer; the application was frequently renewed without effect, and the Irish only became denizens individually by intermarrying with English subjects.

It is therefore perfectly evident, that, as soon as the natural distinctions of native Irish and English settlers began to cease by the operation of time, and the blending together the two people, it was the policy of that party who possessed the exclusive power and patronage of the government of Ireland, to create some marked difference, for the purpose of maintaining their own superiority over the great body of the nation. The distinction of English and Irish law, and the Brehon jurisdiction, served as barriers of exclusion against the native Irish before the Reformation. Since the reign of Henry VIII. the difference of religion has, with equal convenience, performed the same office of separation and exclusion. The impolitic conduct of the earliest English settlers, laid the foundation of national aversion and discontent; and the few instances of the popularity of the English governors in Ireland, are to be found in these administrations which were adverse to the violent exertion of authority, and disposed to conciliate their subjects, rather than to extend their own power.

Under Henry VI. the native Irish were much reconciled to the dominion of England, by a system of government which was comparatively mild and equitable. In the reign of Edward VI. some feeble attempts were made to reform the church; but, by pursuing a cautious conduct, differences were avoided; and the country appears to have been so tranquil, that the reformed religion might have been established, if the government had agreed to the renewed application for extending the English law, and abolishing the Brehon jurisdiction.

James I., by wise measures, contributed more than any former sovereign, to the civilization of Ireland, by introducing Scotch and English colonies, by reforming the jurisprudence, by destroying the chieftainries, and by extending throughout the country the benefit of English laws. The parliament assembled in 1614, was composed of 101 recusants, and 125 Protestants (six members being absent); it was violently factious; but, by the King's moderation, an accommodation took place; the laws against Irish intercourse were abolished, and the civilization of the country proceeded rapidly, and has been gradually advancing till the present time.

The hasty review which is here given of the maxims and practice of the Irish government, has been introduced for the purpose of proving the extreme impolicy of those intolerant and exclusive principles by which it has too often been guided. Since Ireland became subject to the crown of England, it has been the great principle and rule of government to counteract that natural union and intermixture of the two nations, which time and intercourse gradually accomplish, to produce an effect diametrically the reverse of that, which all wise conquerors have endeavoured to promote and accelerate. When the natural distinction begins to fail, the line of separation

is continued by the artificial operation of laws and institutions; as if it was the intention of the British government to preserve, in the most lasting manner, the memory of conquest and injustice.

In the actual situation of the Catholics of Ireland will be found a sufficient reason for their anxiety to acquire a due share of political power. There is no necessity to enter into any disquisition to prove the absolute necessity of some share of political influence for the security of civil rights; and this necessity was never more striking than in the case of the great majority of the population of Ireland. The Catholics are by law excluded from parliament, from all the great offices of state, from the highest employments and honours of the law, and of the army and navy; privations, it must be admitted, sufficiently extensive to excite a desire and even an impatience for relief. But when we consider the effect produced upon public opinion by this "humiliating and ignominious system" (to use the language of the petitioners) "of exclusion, reproach, and suspicion, which these statutes generate and keep alive;" and above all that hostile spirit which is inflamed against them, we must in candour, acknowledge the truth and justice of their complaints, and admit that they do not enjoy the common benefits of the constitution, or the protection of the laws.

In addition to those privations which have before been specified, they are systematically excluded from places of power and consequence, from the offices of sheriffs and under-sheriffs, and although not incapacitated by law, they are, in practice and effect, excluded from serving on juries. Let us only look to the consequences which are found to arise from this single exclusion from the office of sheriffs. In a country divided by two hostile parties, where the great majority have no efficient protection against

their privileged and legalized oppressors, uncontrolled and exclusive power is too liable to abuse even when entrusted to the best and most virtuous agents; but when it is delegated to the lowest classes of the society, on account of some distinction of colour or of religion, or for some other quality distinct from the just and natural claim to superiority and influence; we may then with reason apprehend, that the maxim of a great writer will be verified in its fullest extent, and that the people will indeed experience that there is no tyranny so galling and intolerable, as that where oppression is committed under the sanction and authority of the laws.

We believe it would not be difficult to produce many cases of injuries and violence committed against Catholics, where juries have acted with the most flagrant and determined party-spirit, and have refused to reconsider a verdict on the recommendation of the judge, and in defiance of evidence and law. The natural consequences of such proceedings are obvious and undeniable. It is the general persuasion of the Catholics of Ireland, that in any cause where a Protestant is concerned against a Catholic, it is in vain to expect the impartiality of a jury or a just verdict.

These are the plain, unexaggerated grounds of complaint, which are felt with so much acuteness by a very large proportion of our fellow subjects in Ireland. These are the sources of their impatience and irritation; and it is perfectly superfluous to invent other motives, and impute designs against the Protestant ascendancy, or the connection with Britain, or a plan for the resumption of the property confiscated by Cromwell. The substantial abuses and grievances which we have before stated are the true causes of dissatisfaction. The supposed ulterior objects of the Catholics are brought forward by their opponents for

the purpose of misleading the judgment, and justifying the misconduct of Government.

Having considered the question of justice, let us now advert to the policy and expediency of refusing to grant the repeal of these disabilities and of perpetuating the distinctions and animosities of the Irish nation. The intention of the popery laws might originally have been directed to two different objects; first to secure the government established at the revolution, and to confirm the triumph of the prevailing party; and secondly, as an experiment to convert the native Irish to the Protestant faith. The security of the government established at the revolution has been proved by experience to require no longer the same vigilant severity which was perhaps necessary at its first establishment. The design of keeping down a conquered enemy appears to have been gradually abandoned; as we may infer from the numberless persecuting statutes which seemed far better calculated for that purpose, than the remaining acts of exclusion which prevent the Catholics from holding a few offices and enjoying the high honours of the state.

The system of the popery laws in the fulness of their perfection, possessed at least the merit of unity and consistency. It was no imperfect sketch, but a finished work complete in all its parts, presenting a dreadful picture, in which revenge and fear were never more strongly portrayed, or the weakness and feelings of humanity and justice more perfectly concealed, and cast into a deeper and more impenetrable shade. The remnant of this formidable code is now utterly inadequate to the first great object of rivetting the fetters and crushing the whole Catholic interest in Ireland. It is only galling and vexatious, and at the same time inconsistent and ineffectual.

The great experiment of attempting to gain converts

to the Protestant faith by the splendour of the church establishment, by the power of persecution on one side and all the allurements of interest on the other, has now been attempted, during a century, without the most remote prospect of success, the attempt has completely failed, and it is perhaps hardly an exaggeration to state, that the great ecclesiastical establishment of Ireland has never gained a single convert.

In the history of ecclesiastical affairs and the progress of different religions and creeds, it has often been observed that sects only make converts to their faith, and that established well-endowed churches retain with difficulty the members of their communion. Poverty and contempt on the contrary seem congenial to the growth of a religious sect, in the same manner as Christianity itself was first nursed and matured in hardships and poverty. Had the Catholic religion been established in Ireland with all the revenues of a wealthy church, it is probable that religious indifference, and the corruptions of the clergy, would have produced the same effect in Ireland, which in other countries of Europe (when ripe for the change) have prepared the way for the adoption of a more pure and reformed religion.

It seems then to be impossible either in justice or policy to defend the system of government in Ireland; nor can any justification of its conduct be derived from the circumstances connected with the French revolution which has had so mighty an effect on the affairs of the world. Republican and revolutionary principles have no connection whatever with the Catholic religion; on the contrary they are in direct opposition, and at utter variance with each other. The Catholic religion has generally been accused of being too favourable to power, not too indulgent to liberty. It has frequently been charged with in-

culcating arbitrary and monarchical principles, but never with an innovating republican spirit, and it must be acknowledged that the tendency of its doctrines is most likely to produce such a bias in the minds of its followers. It is capable, no doubt, of existing in a free country; it has, in fact, so existed: but its natural and favourite soil is monarchy. If therefore in our time the Catholics have been open to the seduction of republicans, and if they have been ready to imbibe new and speculative systems of government, that very phenomenon, in men of their persuasion and faith, is a proof of the hardships which they suffer, and a consequence not of their religion, but of their treatment. In common life, if a man of domestic temper and sober habits is seen to avoid his home, to seek for dissipation, and to shun the company of his family, does it not amount to a proof that he has been disgusted by some ill usage or misfortune, and driven by the comfortless existence which awaits him at home to extremities so little congenial to his nature and disposition?

The Catholics in Ireland, like all other men, have a regard to their own interests, and under the pressure of persecution have no doubt been disposed, imprudently and unadvisedly, but yet naturally, to seek relief from their present grievances, without sufficient examination of the nature of the remedy, or a calm comparison of its probable effects with those of the disorder it was intended to cure. An impatience of suffering produces a desire of change; and in the very spirit in which some infatuated people may have looked for relief to Robespierre and anarchy, or to Buonaparte and military government, the Catholics of Ireland, in the height of their despair, may be disposed to accept the assistance of the enemy of Great Britain. That they feel most acutely the innumerable vexations to which their whole community is daily

and hourly exposed, is evident from the opinions delivered by the movers of the petition in their speeches, at a meeting held in the month of February last, at Dublin. It was there avowed, that an arbitrary government would be to them far preferable to the vexatious oppression of their inferiors in education, manners, wealth, or rank in society. In this humiliating situation we can scarcely blame, we must rather pity and lament their condition, when we hear that the subjects of this free government are driven to contemplate with satisfaction this extreme and desperate remedy.

The narrow system of suspicion and restraint, which has long been the fundamental maxim of our policy with respect to Ireland, secures the attainment of no one great or desirable object. It alienates the affections of a great and important class of our fellow-subjects; it has endangered the existence of the British power in Ireland without the slightest present advantage, or even the most remote possible benefit. We may observe, upon this occasion, that there does not occur in the history of the world a single instance of any other great nation whose rules and principles of government have so long and uniformly been guided by this pernicious system of excluding its subjects from the service of the state, on the sole account of religious opinions. The enlarged and comprehensive policy which raises nations to prosperity is utterly incompatible with the low passions and prejudices to which bigotry alone can appeal, and upon which such a system of intolerance and persecution can alone be founded.

How many states have been precipitated to their ruin by listening to the intemperate suggestions of religious zealots, in preference to the timely admonitions of statesmen and philosophers! The Spanish government in the pride of dominion and power, and in the

zeal of its orthodox faith, expelled the most industrious and useful subjects, and waged a long and fruitless war against her unoffending provinces in the Low Countries, for the cause of the church, and the extirpation of heresy. That power preferred the dominion over a ruined and orthodox country, to the prosperity of infidels and heretics. But at the same time that we condemn the conduct of Spain we must acknowledge the consistency of her policy. The Duke of Alva had resolved to carry on a war of extermination in the Netherlands; the Moors were by a bold decisive act expelled from the territories of Spain; and the Inquisition strangled in their birth all opinions condemned by the church. This was at least an efficient system; and one which allowed neither the time nor the means of propagating what were considered to be false and dangerous novelties. The system of government which *we* have adopted offends and irritates, but leaves ample power to retaliate.

If we direct our attention to the present awful situation of the British empire, we shall find the most irresistible reasons for an immediate alteration of the conduct of government towards the Catholics of Ireland. We are at this moment engaged in a contest for the independence and existence of our country, against the most formidable power which has ever been known in Europe, with strength and resources hardly adequate to the arduous nature of the conflict. In this great crisis of the empire, threatened with danger from abroad, with disaffection at home, under all the difficulty of providing an efficient regular army, we deprive the state of one great branch of the national strength, and on the grounds of religious differences refuse to accept the services of millions of our fellow-subjects. Let us seriously consider, whether it can be the true policy of the British empire,

whose subjects are composed of every race, language, and colour, of every sect of every religion in the world, whose armies are composed of Christians, of Hindoos, of Malays, and of Negroes, the followers of Mahomet, of Brama, and of Booda, to prescribe the particular faith and creed of those to whom it will condescend to commit its defence and preservation.

In the present circumstances of the empire, it is surely to the last degree important, and highly essential to the interests and preservation of Great Britain, to attach the whole mass and effective strength of the Irish nation to the general interests of the empire, and to abolish all distinctions and animosities arising from the diversity of religion, or from ancient prejudices. A change of this extensive nature cannot be expected to be carried into effect with the concurrence and approbation of the multitude who have from tradition received a strong bias and an unfavourable impression against the Roman Catholic body. The effect of these bad laws has been to promote the growth of national aversion and bigotry, the most powerful magnifiers of every object in disputes of this nature. A change in the laws only can produce a change in the public opinion, and correct the errors produced by a bad system of legislation.

A comprehensive system of conciliation in Ireland, by removing the grounds of discontent and the rallying points of disaffection, will provide the most substantial security to the union of these kingdoms, and will heal those internal disorders and dissensions which now form the best hopes of the enemy.

The military force and energy of the British empire are now crippled and circumscribed by the absolute necessity of employing so large a part of our force to maintain the obedience and tranquillity of Ireland; the recruiting service is rendered unproductive,

entire regiments of Irish Catholics are compelled to seek a foreign service, and the army is in this manner deprived of a great proportion of its best resources and natural supply. The population which would augment our battalions, the courage which would increase and partake of our triumphs, is uselessly and criminally wasted in disorderly combinations against the government, in ineffectual and treasonable struggles with the civil authority of the state; and regiments already disciplined to war and ripe for action, are reduced, by the continuance of this disgusting system, to the ignominious and disgusting duty of police officers within the heart of their country.

The continuance of this miserable policy is injurious to the interests of England, injurious to the Protestant interest of Ireland, and injurious to the church itself, because it tends to the general ruin and subjugation of the country. It disunites the people from the government, and holds out a direct encouragement to the enemy to expose the weak and vulnerable part of our dominions. The most inveterate enemies of the Catholic cause, those who dread the resumption of property, and still tremble under all the fears which alarmed their ancestors in the century before the last, must at this time allow that the danger from foreign conquest is increased beyond all calculation from the prevalence of discontent and despair at home. In the event of real danger from abroad the situation of the Irish Protestant is distressing and perilous in the extreme; he cannot expect the least assistance from the great body of the people of Ireland, he can scarcely rely even on their neutrality in the contest. The prospect of England is not more encouraging, if the fate of the war, by any accident against which it is impossible to guard, is to be decided upon the soil of Ireland; in a country alienated and disgusted by

the rejection of its claims, and suffering under the vexatious and insolent superiority of those to whom all authority and influence is delegated. The ingenuity of the most skilful enemy could not possibly devise a more advantageous point of attack or a concurrence of circumstances better suited in all respects to his designs. Without attempting to estimate the whole extent of the evil arising from a successful invasion of Ireland, it may very reasonably be presumed that the separation of Ireland would very shortly precede the entire ruin and destruction of England.

The system of government in Ireland has frequently been defended by appealing to the authority of King William, and to the sanction of his great name, and to the principles established during that enlightened and glorious reign. The lowest and most ignorant Protestant in Ireland, when he assists in insulting or perhaps in plundering the prostrate Catholics, consoles himself with the idea that he is imitating his deliverer, the Prince of Orange, in the exercise of a just vengeance against Papists and rebels. The anniversary of the battle of the Boyne is still observed with unabated ardour for the humiliation of the Catholics, and the gratification of religious and political rancour; and it is only within a year that the Duke of Bedford has had the merit of being the first Lord Lieutenant who refused to grace the procession with his presence.

If we examine the history of the times which immediately followed the Revolution, and particularly the personal character of King William, there is good reason to believe, that the persecution of the Catholics of Ireland is not to be attributed to the illustrious hero of toleration and liberty. It is painful to reflect on the injustice and ingratitude of any inhabitant of this free country, who traduces the memory of the great restorer of the rights and liberties of England

by degrading him to the level of a bigot and a persecutor.

It is not to be denied that many acts of severity against the Catholics passed in the course of this reign. The current of opinion at that time had acquired a degree of force and violence, which the new government had not the power to resist; and the confiscations and numerous acts of attainders of James II. absolutely required a restoration of property, and a re-settlement of the former order of things. But in the conduct of King William himself, we perceive every indication of liberality and mercy towards a vanquished enemy; and we may fairly presume, that the exceptions were unavoidable, and forced upon him by the necessity of his situation:—

> "Res duræ et regni novitas me talia cogunt
> Moliri."

The capitulation of Limerick granted a general indemnity to the Irish, and reinstated them in all the privileges of subjects, on condition of taking the oath of allegiance, without being required to take that of supremacy. They were restored to the same exercise of their religion as they enjoyed in the reign of Charles II. All prisoners of war were set at liberty; and the officers and soldiers desirous of following King James were furnished with passports and transports.

The lenity of the King appears to have excited considerable dissatisfaction; and complaints were frequently made by Parliament against the moderation of his government. In 1692, Sir F. Blewster, and Mr. Stone, two members of the Irish Parliament, were examined at the bar of the English House of Commons on the abuses of government. The House addressed the King on the alleged grievances of Ireland, and complained of the protection granted to

Papists, of the reversal of outlawries, and of the indulgences extended to the Catholics by the capitulation of Limerick. At the same time loud complaints were made in Ireland against the access of Catholics to the King. An address was sent to the throne by the Irish Parliament of 1700, to put the laws in force against Popish recusants; and an act of unexampled severity was passed against Catholic priests, and Catholic proprietors of land, which was counteracted by the superior wisdom and beneficence of the executive power.

We are enabled, from these repeated proofs of the violence of party spirit in the Parliament and the nation to vindicate the character of King William from a foul and malignant accusation. We find, on the contrary, abundant proof of a wise and liberal system of government in the personal acts and wishes of the monarch, unfortunately overruled in his views for the public good by the passions and prejudices of the people.

The celebrated Act of Toleration in England, which passed in the first year of that reign, is well known to have proceeded from the liberal, just, and generous disposition of the King. Bishop Burnet's observations, in speaking of the Toleration Act, are decisive of the King's opinions upon this subject; and indeed the whole passage is worthy of notice, as being singularly applicable to our own times. "The clergy," he says, "began now to show an implacable hatred to the Nonconformists, and seemed to wish for an occasion to renew old severities against them. But wise and good men did very much applaud the quieting the nation by the toleration. It seemed to be suitable both to the spirit of the Christian religion and to the interest of the nation. It was thought very unreasonable, that while we were complaining of the cruelty of the church of Rome, we should fall into

such practices among ourselves; chiefly, while we were engaging in a war, in the progress of which we should need the united strength of the whole nation. —This Bill (the Toleration Act) gave the King great content. He, in his own opinion, always thought that conscience was God's province, and that it ought not to be imposed on; and his experience in Holland made him look on toleration as one of the wisest measures of government. He was much troubled to see so much ill humour spreading among the clergy, and by their means over a great part of the nation. He was so true to his principle herein, that he restrained the heat of some who were proposing severe acts against Papists. He made them apprehend the advantage which that would give the French, to alienate all the Papists of Europe from us; who from thence might hope to set on foot a new Catholic league, and make the war a quarrel of religion; which might have very bad effects. Nor could he pretend to protect the Protestants in many places of Germany and in Hungary, unless he could cover the Papists in England from all severities on account of their religion. This was so carefully infused into many, and so well understood by them, that the Papists have enjoyed the real effects of the toleration, though they were not comprehended within the statute that enacted it."*

We now proceed to consider the policy of King William's government in Scotland; in order that we may justly appreciate the merits of his reign, and of that wise system of policy by which he endeavoured to compose the distractions and discontents of that unhappy country. Mr. Laing's excellent history has lately exposed the atrocious tyranny of Charles II. and James II. in Scotland, and unveiled the horrors

* Burnet's History of his own Time, vol. ii. p. 13. folio.

and cruelties committed under the authority of those princes, which, it is not too much to assert, were never surpassed by the most remorseless persecutors. We perpetually read in the course of this history of inhuman murders, committed without even the semblance of law, of the wretched peasantry frequently shot on the roads, and at their occupations in the fields. The establishment of episcopacy and the destruction of the Presbyterian religion were the cause of these persecutions; and produced a series of atrocities which would be incredible in a civilised age and country, if they were not attested beyond the possibility of dispute by the records of the privy council.

Military execution was inflicted on these unhappy people, who were hunted on the hills, and destroyed when overtaken in the chase. They were accused only of the crime of attending public worship in the open fields. The preachers at these field-conventicles were subject to the penalty of death, and confiscation of property; and the whole congregation were liable to the same severity of punishment. In the hands of the furious ministers and agents of the Stuarts, these detestable laws were not suffered to remain obsolete. Persecution in every mode was practised, and each succeeding act surpassed the sanguinary penalties of the former. In proportion to the savage cruelty of the laws, the government was rendered hateful to its subjects; and it is highly probable that the Revolution, which put an end to this intolerable tyranny in Scotland, preserved that country to the Crown of England. The Presbyterian religion, to which the great majority of the nation was attached, after a struggle which had continued with little intermission from the accession of James I., was at last established by law, and secured in all the rights of a national church.

After the experience of a century, we have had no

reason to believe, that the establishment of the Presbyterian church discipline, by many persons supposed to be hostile to monarchy, has had the least tendency to weaken the obedience of the subject, subvert the royal authority, or endanger the episcopal church of England. We have in this island a living example of two distinct and originally hostile religions existing by law in different parts of the same kingdom, manifestly to the general advantage and security; because in each case the established mode of church discipline is agreeable to the opinions of the majority of the people.

In order more fully to illustrate our subject by this important example, let us consider the probable consequences of a different system of policy, and the state to which this great country might have been reduced by an obstinate perseverance in the narrow maxims and prejudices of the Stuarts. Had that system of bigotry and oppression been continued, had the episcopal church been maintained in Scotland by the same means as have been employed for maintaining the Protestant faith in Ireland, the northern part of this island would at this time have been a centre of discontent and rebellion, and a point of weakness and danger to the empire.

It is an important but melancholy truth, that bigotry and intolerance are not peculiar to any sect or establishment. In our zeal against the excesses of the popes and cardinals of former times, we entirely overlook the offences of our Protestant ancestors. "All men," says Mr. Burke, "possessed of an uncontrolled discretionary power, tending to the aggrandisement and profit of their own body, have always abused it;" and we must in candour admit that the church of England herself is no exception to this general maxim. From the accession of the House of Hanover to the present time, the English

clergy have never appeared as oppressors or persecutors; and we acknowledge them, as a body, to be the best regulated and most tolerant of any ecclesiastical establishment in Christendom. But were they so, it may fairly be asked, when they were entrusted with power? Were they so in the reigns of James I. and Charles I.? Were they lenient towards the Scotch Presbyterians at the latter end of the reign of Charles II. or the beginning of James II.'s? Were they so towards the Irish Catholics at the time of the Revolution or since that period? Above all, were they so in the zenith of their power, during the Tory administration of Queen Anne? The toleration allowed to Dissenters, and the mildness of the church discipline since that period, are unquestionably in strict conformity with the principles of the church of England, and of every other Christian church; but they are to be attributed to the spirit of the times, and in no respect to the moderation or forbearance of the hierarchy. They are the happy result of the liberal maxims of King William, of the disuse of the convocation, of the influence which the Dissenters have always had, and to which they are well entitled, with the party of the Whigs; and of the principles of toleration which, with a few exceptions, have prevailed from the time of the Revolution, and more especially since the accession of the House of Hanover.

We have seen the happy effects of following these enlightened maxims of state policy instead of adhering to the narrow principles of churchmen, in the conduct of King William, towards the Scotch Presbyterians; and in the advantages which have resulted from the quiet and secure establishment of a sect which had rendered itself so obnoxious to the partisans of monarchy by its invincible spirit, no less than by its free and democratical principles. We may hence form some judgment of the consequences which may be

expected to follow in Ireland from the removal of those remaining causes of irritation, of which the members of the Catholic religion, who by their principles are naturally favourable to monarchy, at present complain.

It was upon these principles of justice and policy, confirmed by the experience of all ages and countries, that the leading members of both houses of Parliament, in the session of 1805, supported the petition of the Irish Catholics. It was their object in this appeal to the legislature to give a pledge of their opinions and future conduct; to convince the petitioners that there existed in England a powerful party friendly to their cause, to hold out the certainty of ultimate success, as an inducement to submit with patience to present evils; and above all, to prevent that despair which might throw them into the arms of France.

Those who are unconvinced by these reasons of expediency, or rather indeed of political necessity, are not likely to listen to other arguments. We will venture, however, to urge on behalf of the Irish Catholics, in addition to what has been already stated, that they are not only entitled to that consideration and tenderness which, according to the principles of genuine toleration, is at all times due to religious sincerity; but that they have also the strong additional claim to our respect derived from an attachment to the religion of their ancestors, maintained with unshaken fidelity under every species of contumely and degradation.

It may reasonably be asked, with what propriety do we condemn the ignorance and bigotry of the lowest order of the Catholics, and endeavour to justify the faults of government, by calumniating the religion of its subjects? It may fairly be retorted on us that the ignorance and barbarism of the people is to be at-

tributed, in no small degree, to the neglect and vices of their rulers; and it is therefore an idle and fallacious sophism to defend our own misconduct by attacking the Catholic religion, the received faith of almost the whole of civilised Europe. If the principles of the Catholic religion were really adverse to subordination, as has been represented by the friends of Protestant ascendency, the states of Europe ought never to have emerged from the turbulence of the middle ages, or enjoyed the benefits of settled government and regular authority. The decisive objection to these general and declamatory arguments against the dangerous tenets of the church of Rome is, that they prove infinitely too much; because they prove not only the dangerous effects of these principles operating on the Catholics of Ireland, but the instability of the most secure and best established governments in the world.

If the charge against the Catholic religion is intended to be confined to those particular cases only, in which a Protestant sovereign governs a Catholic country, and the danger is supposed to arise from the hatred which true Catholics entertain against the temporal power of heretics, rather than from the spiritual supremacy of a foreign jurisdiction; we may confidently refer to an important event in the modern history of Europe, as affording the most decisive answer to this objection. We allude to the conquest of Silesia from the House of Austria, and the history of that province since its annexation to the Prussian monarchy, as facts which afford a complete answer to the unjust charges so frequently made against the Catholics, for their supposed want of allegiance to Catholic governments. Silesia was a Catholic country conquered from a Catholic sovereign by a Protestant power. To state the case still more strongly, the conquest was made by the chief of the reformed re-

ligion in Germany, from the head of the empire, and the defender of the Catholic faith and interest. The prejudices in favour of the House of Austria, the ancient sovereigns of the country, all the ties and connections which in general have so powerful an influence, must have operated in the strongest manner against the recent establishment of the Prussian power. But by the prudence and policy of the great Frederic in conciliating his newly-acquired Catholic subjects, and obliterating all distinctions of religious opinions, his Silesian provinces remained as firmly attached, during the whole of the seven years' war, as any part of his hereditary dominions. Prussia was at that time deprived of allies and resources, and was frequently on the verge of destruction by invading armies traversing a narrow and defenceless tract of country. The continuance of Silesia, as a part of the Prussian monarchy, depended on the attachment of the Catholics; and the confidence of a liberal and tolerant government was nobly repaid by the fidelity of its new subjects under the most adverse and trying circumstances.

But we are told that the Catholics of Ireland are distinguished from the rest of their persuasion by some peculiar bigotry, some deep and incurable hostility to the Protestant faith and government. If this suspicion be well founded, if the Irish Catholics indeed feel this alienation from the common cause and general interests of the empire, let us ask ourselves whether the treatment they have received has entitled us to their warm attachment? Have we bestowed on them the benefits of religious freedom, equal laws, or political weight and importance? Unfortunately the answer must be, that if participation of the benefits of civil rights and good government constitute the just title to allegiance, we can have little claim to the gratitude and attachment of our Catholic fellow-

subjects. We refuse to show any indulgence even towards such of them as are engaged in our protection and defence. So far from relieving them from any part of the suspicion and obloquy to which they have been left exposed, by the language and conduct of the legislature, we augment and multiply the causes of their discontent by insulting their religion, and depriving them of the rites of their church, and the free exercise of their worship. It is a well-known fact that the common soldiers of Irish regiments, when brought to this country, have in several instances been compelled to attend the service of the church of England; and that in barracks where hundreds of Catholic soldiers have been quartered, the admission of a Catholic priest has been strictly prohibited, or if obtained for the sick, has been allowed only by the express interference of the commanding officers.

It was the boast of Lord Chatham that he was the first minister who had called forth the services of the hardy natives of the North, and opened the road of preferment indifferently to all his Majesty's subjects, whether born on this or that side of the Tweed. There remains to the statesmen of the present age the higher and nobler duty of abolishing the distinctions of religious opinions, and uniting all the subjects of this extensive empire in one common bond against the most formidable enemy to whom it has ever yet been opposed. Instead of pursuing this exalted career, the British government, at the commencement of the nineteenth century, seem disposed to follow the example of the degenerate subjects of the Roman empire at the period of its final extinction. When Constantinople was besieged and on the point of surrendering to an hostile army, these wretched fanatics, instead of uniting their forces against the common enemy, were occupied among themselves in religious dissensions. At this most alarming period,

as we learn from the historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, "the Latins were considered by them as the most odious of infidels and heretics; and their first minister, the Great Duke, was heard to declare, that he had rather behold in Constantinople the turban of Mahomet than the Pope's tiara or a Cardinal's hat."*

* Decline and Fall, vol. xii. p. 209. 8vo.

SPEECHES.

SPEECHES.

ON LORD HOLLAND'S MOTION FOR A COMMITTEE TO INQUIRE INTO THE CAUSES OF THE FAILURE OF THE LATE EXPEDITION TO HOLLAND.

I RISE to state as shortly as possible the grounds on which I think it my duty to support the present motion. There are many reasons why every motion for inquiry and investigation should be listened to with an attentive ear by Parliament. In cases of failure and disaster, it must be evident that the benefits to be derived from investigation will always greatly exceed the disadvantages which can be apprehended; for even if the case is of that nature that its remedy can be applied, yet at least you will be able, by exposing the causes of the failure, to prevent a repetition of the same calamity in future. In the present situation of this country, when ministers have rejected the pacific overture of the enemy, there is a peculiar strong inducement to examine the conduct of this which is their greatest military enterprise, because it is essential for them to prove, since they are resolved to prolong hostilities to an indefinite period, that they are not incapable of conducting them, and that they are capable of making war, since they will not consent to make peace. A still further reason for inquiry in addition to those which I have already mentioned is, that the past conduct of administration in military affairs affords no ground of

presumption in their favour. I appeal on this occasion to a test to which they have lately been very fond of referring—to the result of experience, and to the evidence of facts; but I appeal to this test with much better confidence than they can pretend to, because I refer to that experience which is *past*, not to that which is future and contingent—all our boasted military enterprises in Europe—Toulon, Quiberau, Corsica, Ostend, and lastly the most unfortunate expedition to the Helder, which have all, without a single exception, terminated in disgrace and disappointment. It might have been some excuse for former failures—for instance, those in the American war, to say that the great distance of the seat of war rendered it necessary to entrust the commanders with great discretionary powers, and that ministers were not answerable for those delays and errors which are inseparable from the nature of that service; but whatever excuses might have been given at that time they can be of no service in the present instance, because the late expedition differs in this material respect: the distance did not exceed forty-eight hours' sail off our own coast, and therefore the time and place, were at our own option, and no sufficient reason can be given that an expedition which failed in consequence of bad weather in September and October, did not take place in June or July. From these circumstances it appears that this expedition evidently admits of a separate discussion, and must be considered on very different grounds from those enterprises which are undertaken in distant countries, and depend upon accidents which are beyond all foresight and calculation. If the necessity of inquiry exists in proportion to the importance of the object and the magnitude of the loss sustained, then whether we consider the thousands who have perished or the millions which have been squandered, or in

whatever light we view the late failure, it must be evident that parliament was never more loudly called on than at present to enter into a severe investigation, and to repair the disgrace which the country has suffered by this unfortunate enterprise. Since the commencement of this war, it has been the practice of Parliament to repose unlimited confidence in ministers, to grant unlimited powers, and to grant unlimited supplies. To make a complete change in the financial and military system of the country, in 1797 they imposed the assessed taxes, in 1798 the income tax, in 1799 they nearly abolished the constitutional force of the militia in order to increase the regular army. Ministers have not experienced the least control; all the power, all the resources of the country have been at their disposal. On this account they must be considered to be responsible in a much higher degree than any former administration, and the greatness of the failure is greatly aggravated by the extent of the power and of the confidence which they have thus abused. It is now time at length to show that the sole occupation of Parliament does not consist in granting new powers, and laying new burthens on the country: you ought now to examine in what manner that power and those resources have been employed; whether a tenth of the property and industry of the country, that solid system of finance on the strength and credit of which the war is now to be continued, has or has not been dissipated in a wanton and desperate enterprise. What other means can be pointed out for preventing the same errors from being again repeated on a much larger scale, unless Parliaments will interfere and exercise that right which they undoubtedly possess, of inquiring into past errors and past misconduct? What occasion can be more proper than when disappointment has been carried to the utmost height? Such sanguine hopes of success were

entertained by the projectors of the expedition, that the possibility of failure seems not to have been taken into calculation. What, unless the absolute certainty of success, can account for the time of year when the troops were landed at the Helder—the equinox was approaching, all the disadvantages of bad roads and bad weather might naturally be expected, the troops were also exposed to disease in so marshy a country as North Holland—the time of year rendered supplies uncertain, and retreat extremely hazardous. In addition to all the difficulties which an invading army must always encounter, the hostile disposition of the inhabitants opposed still further obstacles, and proved beyond all doubt that the planners of the expedition were no less ignorant of the temper of the people whom they professed to deliver, than of the force of the enemy which they had to oppose. The principles which prevail in cabinets are so notorious, that high professions of disinterestedness, benevolence, and deliverance from oppression, are always extremely to be suspected from whatever quarter they proceed, whether from a Jacobin republic offering fraternity, or a regular government offering deliverance; but they are suspicious in a still higher degree when they consist in general terms, and studiously avoid positive engagements. Had the people of Holland any reason to expect from our proclamation that their colonies would be restored, and things replaced as before the war? did we renounce our intention of interfering in the settlement of their government? On the contrary, had they not reason to fear that the object of the armament was to innovate upon the ancient republican constitution; to increase the power of the Stadtholder; to establish some strong government, which in the language of ministers should be free from the imputation of miserable weakness, under which they have avowed the old government has so

long laboured? If this was the species of deliverance intended, namely, to impose on any people a government contrary to their consent and interest, it was not a legitimate object; it was as unjust in the principle as it was rash and imprudent in the event. The proposed inquiry was absolutely necessary for the vindication of ministers.

A division took place: for the motion, 6; against it, 51.

ON THE HABEAS CORPUS SUSPENSION BILL.*

(February 27. 1800.)

I should think myself wanting in respect to the constitution of my country and to one of the most essential and most valuable parts of it, the act for securing the personal liberty of the subject, if I gave a silent vote on the present occasion, or if I did not oppose to the utmost of my power so violent a measure as the present, introduced and supported upon such slight and insufficient grounds.

The arguments in support of this Bill have been entirely founded upon the state of the country in 1798, and upon the reports of the committee published in the following year.

The necessity of suspending the Habeas Corpus Act appears to be taken for granted, and you are called upon to consent to a further suspension of the liberties of the country as a matter of course, like the Mutiny Bill, or any other annual act upon mere allegation, upon general assertion, without any in-

* From a manuscript in Lord King's handwriting.

quiry or investigation by a committee appointed for that purpose, on the simple request of his Majesty's ministers, who, so far from furnishing you with proofs, do not even condescend to state any specific distinct grounds on which the present measure is to be justified. In this respect, I apprehend that the present proceeding has no precedent, and is perfectly new in the annals of Parliament. All former suspensions of the Habeas Corpus have taken place in times of great and acknowledged public danger from foreign invasion or internal rebellion, or, at least, in consequence of parliamentary inquiry and parliamentary reports stating the necessity of the measure.

Your Lordships will recollect the circumstances under which the act passed in 1798; at that time a great alarm of invasion prevailed, a message was sent by his Majesty to inform Parliament that hostile preparations were carrying on in the ports of France, and that the enemy was assisted by correspondence with the disaffected in this country. On this account the Habeas Corpus was suspended for a year; and in 1799 there was a still further suspension, not upon mere general assertion, but in consequence of a very long elaborate parliamentary report, stating a great variety of facts with respect to the conduct of certain societies whom they alleged to be hostile to the government and constitution of the country. The terrors, therefore, of invasion and the dangers of insurrection are the grounds upon which this act has been hitherto suspended — how far with sufficient reason is not necessary at present to inquire. But without entering into that question, and allowing for the sake of the argument that the apprehension of danger was originally well-founded, and that this precaution was necessary for the security of the country, where is now the proof that the same danger and the same necessity still exist? Must these alarms

be perpetuated as long as French principles exist in the world? or as long as any number of men in this country, however inconsiderable, are suspected of disaffection to the established constitution and government?

The Parliaments of King William and Queen Anne, of George I. and George II., might with much greater reason have declared the country to have been in danger until the extinction of the House of Stuart, because a great party of the people of this country were attached to the claims of the exiled family; but if they had pursued this conduct, if they had called for powers of arbitrary imprisonment, if they had suspended the Constitution of the country from year to year, they would have deserted those principles of freedom which established the present family on the throne, and to which, at that time, they were, happily for this country, compelled in their own defence to appeal. Since ministers have been so much in the habit on all occasions to refer to the wisdom of our ancestors and the practice of the Constitution, it may be of some use to consider what was done by those Parliaments to which I have alluded, with reference to the present measure. Acts for suspending the Habeas Corpus have been passed very rarely. I believe that prior to the present war this measure has been resorted to four times since the Revolution; twice in the reign of King William, immediately after the Revolution, and on account of the assassination plot; once in the reign of George I., on the rebellion of 1715; and once in that of George II., in 1745; the last is the only occasion on which it was continued for more than a single year.

During the period to which I have referred, I mean from the time of the Revolution to the year 1746, the danger was imminent, and the situation of the country was critical and alarming in the extreme; the Con-

stitution was threatened, not by speculative opinions, but by a disputed title to the throne, supported by a foreign force and a powerful domestic faction — a faction which was not confined to a few obscure individuals or visionary enthusiasts, but which included many men of the first rank and consideration in the country; yet even in those times it was only when these opinions broke out in actual rebellion, that Parliament thought themselves justified in investing the Crown with so dangerous a power, and they refused to extend the duration of that power beyond the particular emergency which made it necessary.

Instead of stating, in defence of the present measure, any distinct ground of danger from rebellion or invasion, they insist in general terms on the danger of Jacobinism — a term which they have never yet defined, but with which their followers have branded every person who does not agree with them on the justice and necessity of the present war.

If general assertions of disaffection and disloyalty are sufficient for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, such pretexts can never be wanting. If we are to wait for the extinction of Jacobinism, and if it is true, as we have lately been told, that the taint of Jacobinism can never be removed, and if, according to the calculation of a great master of this species of political arithmetic, there are 60,000 incorrigible Jacobins in this country, the present generation may pass away before the blessing of the Habeas Corpus and the rights of personal freedom are restored.

Discontents may have arisen from the distresses of the times and the pressure of accumulated taxes, from the inequality of the parliamentary representation, or from the desire of introducing some specious theoretical alterations into the government; such is in general the nature of the disease, the remedy for

which is not a little extraordinary. Instead of correcting any abuses which may have crept into the administration of the government, and reclaiming the disaffected by showing that the British Constitution is in fact well calculated to secure the liberty and happiness of the people,—instead of making men sensible of the practical merits of your system, you furnish the disaffected with new pretexts, you add new strength to the original causes of complaint, by suspending the most solid and valuable blessing which the Constitution affords, that which of all things most materially and intimately concerns the great body of the people. As long as the Habeas Corpus remains suspended, and the personal liberty of individuals has no other safeguard than the forbearance of government, it will be in vain to enlarge on the ideal merits and excellences of the British Constitution, because unless it affords that personal security which is one of the first and immediate objects of good government, it will fall very short of that degree of perfection which is constantly assigned to it. By political reasoners personal freedom and security from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment is considered as the peculiar characteristic of the British Constitution—it is that which distinguishes it from the arbitrary monarchies of the Continent, it is the foundation of all other rights, or rather it is the right to which all others are secondary and subordinate.

The political liberty enjoyed under this, or any other Constitution, is chiefly valuable as it forms the security of civil and personal rights; and there is reason to apprehend that the present measure, which so violently encroaches on their freedom, will furnish new arguments for change, will be a strong inducement to persons already disaffected to persist at all hazards in obtaining a parliamentary reform, which

they will have found by experience to be so essentially requisite to their own security.

The greatest and most urgent necessity can alone justify the surrender which you are now making of the security and liberty of the subject: it ought, therefore, to be distinctly ascertained that the ordinary powers of government are insufficient to maintain the tranquillity of the country; it ought to be clearly proved that we are not unnecessarily incurring a certain evil, while we are taking precautions against an imaginary danger. But at this time, when all danger of invasion is removed, when all the property of the country is armed in defence of government, which is in every respect stronger than at any former period, not merely by an increase of influence and revenue, but by a series of restrictive statutes, all of them tending to increase the power of the Crown, and abridge the rights of the people, it seems not merely superfluous, but repugnant to the first principles of justice, to invest the Crown with those powers which ought to be conceded only in cases of the most extreme and imminent danger.

It may be said, that it is to this measure and to the vigilance of government that we are indebted for our security and existence at this moment. I may be permitted to demand the proof of this assertion, and to observe that my judgment will be much more influenced by convictions in courts of justice, than by reports of secret committees.

During the whole of the war one person has been convicted of treason, and even in his case there was no proof of any connection with the corresponding societies. In the proceedings in Ireland there has been no proof of such connection; on the contrary, it has been distinctly contradicted by every thing which has appeared in evidence there. Since this act has been suspended, notwithstanding the assertion of the

secret committee, and the number of persons who have been committed on the charges contained in that report, not a single person has been brought to trial. Now when we recollect that government has shown no backwardness in bringing persons to trial, I would ask to what cause it is that we are to ascribe this forbearance? Is it credible that if disaffection existed in the extent in which it was stated in that report, no means could be found of convicting some one of those persons who have been confined on the charges contained in that report? Is it credible that an extensive conspiracy could exist with a formed plan for the destruction of the Constitution and government, conducted with so much secrecy as to baffle any attempt at judicial investigation, and to make it a hopeless and desperate experiment to bring those who are implicated to justice? I do not deny the existence of opinions in this country hostile to the Constitution and government, but I believe that the number of persons who entertain these opinions is small and inconsiderable; and I contend that until we have further evidence, the facts which I have stated are sufficient to induce your Lordships to suspect the framers of that report, of gross credulity, and the report itself, of gross exaggeration. It has been the policy of this Constitution, in whatever relates to the personal liberty of the people, to leave as little as possible to the discretion of individuals. All arbitrary power, to whomsoever it is entrusted, is sooner or later sure to be abused. Men of the best intentions are liable to error, and whatever may be the personal forbearance of his Majesty's ministers, they must receive their information from others, who may be more under the influence of passion and prejudice. Whole classes of society are exposed to the arbitrary caprice of the agents and subalterns of government, who may recommend themselves to their employers by activity

and zeal in the service; and thus a number of individuals, whose guilt could not have been proved in a court of justice, will have suffered the rigours of a long imprisonment, their credit lost and circumstances exposed to utter ruin, without the means of obtaining redress or appealing to the justice of their country, because the legislature has on very insufficient grounds thought proper to deprive them of the protection of the laws. I do not expect to hear it asserted that this power is granted for the express purpose of punishing those, whose faults do not in the eye of the law amount to any positive crime. It can be justified only as a measure of precaution, and the only shadow or semblance of a reason which can be given in the present tranquil state of the country is, that sufficient time may be allowed to government to procure all the evidence which any case admits, in order that the ends of justice may not be defeated. If this is the only justifiable ground for suspending the Habeas Corpus, I should beg leave to suggest that the act itself ought to fix some reasonable limit sufficient for the purpose of collecting evidence, beyond which the powers of this act should not prevent the person confined from being admitted to bail, if he is not brought to trial before that time. I hope that ministers will see the propriety of some such amendment as that which I have suggested, and the necessity of imposing some restriction upon a power which is obviously capable of being so much abused.

The abuse of this power and the oppression which may be committed under this act do not at first sight appear: the suspension takes place apparently for a limited time, the original period is extended by repeated acts passed from time to time for that purpose —it follows that as the power is never lost, many persons originally apprehended in 1798 may have been detained much longer than can be necessary to collect full proof of their guilt, if it really existed, and a

measure of precaution is perverted into a most cruel punishment, the excess of which loudly calls for some remedy.

These are the reasons which have induced me to oppose the present measure; during the course of this war a series of statutes have passed, adapted to what are supposed to be the political evils of the times, of extreme rigour, imposing many severe restrictions on the ancient liberties of the people. In addition to these permanent laws, you are now called upon to pass a law which gives a dictatorial power to the King's ministers, and which suspends for a time the most important functions of the Constitution. This dictatorial power is required upon such slight and unsatisfactory grounds, is so little called for by the present circumstances of the times, that I cannot think that the grounds alleged are the true reason for demanding this power; I am afraid that something farther is intended, and that it is in consequence of a system steadily pursued, during this reign, of extending the prerogative of the Crown, and encroaching upon the rights of the people, that advantage is taken of the present temper of the public opinion to inure and familiarize men's minds to habits of personal as well as political restraint, and that it is intended by this measure to establish a new precedent for the Crown, and against the people. I am afraid that the same principles of confidence which are now urged in favour of a temporary suspension of our personal rights, may be one day employed to render the suspension permanent, and to destroy the liberties of the country.

ON THE BANK RESTRICTION BILL.

(February 22. 1803.)

Lord King could by no means agree that anything like adequate reasons had been adduced for farther continuing the restriction under the present circumstances of the country. It was a measure which he could not but look upon as a very extraordinary one —a measure that encroached on private property, that violated public faith, and that put the whole monied property of the nation at the mercy of the Bank directors. It was an infringement of the solemn compact which the Bank had entered into with the public when government granted them a charter; and could their Lordships precipitately assent to such a measure without such reasons having been adduced for its absolute necessity, as ought to enforce the strongest conviction in their Lordships' minds. But where were the proofs of that necessity? Did the country now labour under that extraordinary pressure, arising from a variety of difficulties and dangers which were advanced in support of the first adoption of the restriction? On the contrary, was it not confessed to be in a state of the highest commercial prosperity? Where, then, could be the urgent necessity of its renewal? What would be the effect of it, but the encouraging of an enormous issue of paper, which raised the price of every article, and must continue to keep the state of exchange unfavourable to us? To prove that such must be the effect resulting from such a measure, the noble Lord entered into a variety of comparative statements of the course of exchange at different periods. According to these

statements it appeared that, from the time the restriction was first imposed, the course of exchange began to turn against this country in various proportions to the quantity of paper in circulation. Previous to the laying on the restriction, the Bank seldom issued notes to more than the amount of ten, eleven, or twelve millions; but since that period, they issued to the amount of fifteen and sixteen millions. Hence the rise in the price of bullion; for it was justly remarked, that in proportion as paper was plenty, and therefore cheap, gold would be scarce, and consequently dear. The average amount of our circulating medium was about ten millions: that had been found fully sufficient to answer all the purposes of the country. When, therefore, an unnecessary addition was made to it, of one, two, or three millions, there was a depreciation in the value of paper in the same proportion. But it was not merely on account of the inconveniences arising from the measure that he objected to it: he objected to its principle, and to its being drawn into a precedent, which, he feared, would be the case whenever it might suit the convenience of ministers or the Bank; and thus Parliament might be called upon, not only to confide implicitly in ministers, but also to place the same confidence in the Directors of the Bank.

ON THE BANK RESTRICTION BILL.

(December 9. 1803.)

Lord King said that if he had been present at the second reading of the bill, he should have thought it his duty to have urged, at some length, those arguments of justice and policy which struck his mind forcibly as militating against the principle of the bill. The present not being the regular time for discussing the general principle, he should say very little on that part of the subject. He could not, however, avoid expressing his surprise, that a measure of this importance should be so much treated as a matter of course,—that the bill should be read twice within two days after it had been sent from the other House, and that it should have been read for the second time without any previous notice, and without even the usual formality of a few introductory remarks from one of his Majesty's ministers. No inquiry was instituted; no reason was assigned for the passing of the bill, nor was any information laid before the House to prove the expediency of persevering in a system which violated all general principles, and could only be justified by the most urgent necessity. Some very strong reasons ought surely to be assigned for continuing, to a distant and indefinite period, a measure which had not been found necessary in former wars, nor at any period prior to the year 1797, when the restriction was first adopted. It was at that time acknowledged to be a measure of the most questionable nature, and open to the most dangerous abuses. It was now asserted by ministers, and the partisans of the Bank, that the privilege had not been abused, and that no public inconvenience had been ex-

perienced. His Lordship thought that it was a great deal too much to take all this for granted, and that it ought, prior to a continuance of the measure, to be made the subject of inquiry. He was convinced, for his own part, that the contrary was the fact; and, though the abuse had not been flagrant or excessive, that the Bank had yielded in a certain degree, to the temptation, and extended the quantity of their notes beyond the proper limits. By the present measure, the *interest* of the Bank was put in opposition to its *duty;* and in such a competition it was not difficult to conjecture which principle was likely to prevail among a commercial body. Whilst the measure was recent, the Directors appeared to have conducted themselves with great prudence; but since the end of the year 1798, there was reason to believe that they had uniformly, though in different degrees, been guilty of a breach of their trust. He proceeded to state shortly the principles upon which this opinion was founded. An excessive multiplication of bank notes, so long as they cannot be exchanged for specie, had precisely the same effect as a debasement of the current coin; and as the bullion price of silver was the most accurate test of the purity of a coinage, it was the best standard of the degree of depreciation produced by an excessive paper currency. In ordinary circumstances the bullion price of silver seldom much exceeded the mint price, or 5*s.* 2*d.* per ounce; or, if there was any occasional excess, it was not of long continuance. But since the year 1798, it had *uniformly* exceeded that price, being at some periods (in 1800 and 1801) 5*s.* 11*d.* and 6*s.* At present it was 5*s.* 8*d.*, being an excess of 9 per cent. above the mint price. He knew that there were other causes which might produce a temporary effect on the price of bullion; but he considered this uniform and unexampled increase of price, corresponding, as it did, with

the increase in quantity of bank notes, and the depression of foreign exchanges, as affording a decisive evidence of misconduct in the Directors of the Bank. His Lordship illustrated this position by a great variety of calculations and details. He said, that he should propose an amendment to the bill, calculated to give publicity to the proceedings of the Bank, which might operate as a salutary check upon the Directors. He proposed that the Directors should be obliged to publish quarterly in the London Gazette during the period of the restriction, an account of the amount of their notes in circulation on the 25th of each of the three preceding months. By comparing the amount of the notes with the bullion price of silver, and the state of foreign exchange, the public would be enabled to judge at the time, whether the abuse was increasing to any pernicious extent. His Lordship concluded by moving a clause in the Committee to this effect.

IRISH HABEAS CORPUS BILL.

(December 12. 1803.)

Lord King animadverted strongly on the situation in which their Lordships were called on, to pass bills of the nature, which were now under their consideration. The fact was, that not a single tittle of evidence had been produced to establish either their expediency, or, what was more important, their necessity. Ministers had called upon their Lordships to pass bills which they themselves allowed to be of a description only to be resorted to on occasions of an extraordinary nature, without adducing a shadow of evidence to prove that the situation of Ireland was such as to

require such proceedings. It was not to be forgotten that such a call was not of a trivial or unimportant kind. It made an appeal to their Lordships of a description which demanded the most serious consideration. When the question was, whether their Lordships would pass a bill which would have the effect of literally putting about four millions of subjects out of his Majesty's peace, he begged leave to ask whether it was either decent or parliamentary to call on Parliament to consent to a measure of such magnitude, without some striking proofs of its necessity or its expediency? It had been urged by the noble Lord (Hawkesbury) who introduced the subject, that the powers vested in the executive government by the Martial Law Bill were in no instance abused. His Lordship contended that this was not at all an argument which ought to have any considerable force. The question was not how the powers granted by the bill were exercised, but whether such powers were necessary and fit to be entrusted to any executive government. He did not mean to say that the government of Ireland at this moment were guilty of any acts of cruelty under this bill, but he meant to state, that independent of acts of cruelty many severities might be experienced, many inconveniences might be felt. When he said this, he wished to show their Lordships how his observation was fully justified.

The Martial Law Bill, in his opinion, contained such provisions, as entirely put it out of the power of any part of the inhabitants of Ireland fairly to represent the grievances under which the country laboured. He would put it to the candour and liberality of their Lordships, whether any man would choose to put himself in a prominent situation, with all the terrors of martial law hanging over his head. The most respectable individuals in Ireland might be anxious to come forward and lay before the

public an impartial representation of the grievances under which they conceived a large proportion of the population to labour; but was it to be supposed that they would do so, when they knew that by adopting this conduct they would expose themselves to obloquy, if not to the positive vengeance of individuals who would be desirous to misrepresent their views, and expose them to the suspicions of government? This his Lordship thought a matter of most grave consideration, and urged on the attention of their Lordships what would be the consequence of passing such bills in the absence of all evidence of their necessity. What would the people of Ireland think of the conduct of the United Parliament, if they met with nothing on their part but measures of coercion? Would they not be ready to ask, and that too with every claim of justice, that at least some proofs of the necessity of such measures should be adduced? Even now there were many persons in Ireland not reconciled to the Union. It was surely, therefore, no more than what common justice demanded, that the Irish people should not now be more severely treated than they were during the existence of a local legislature. His Lordship having urged this point with considerable force, declared that he could not vote against the motion of the noble Secretary of State, limited as was his present information respecting the actual situation of Ireland. He could not, however, sit down without declaring his conviction of the absolute necessity of a full and impartial investigation of the state of Ireland, a view of its grievances, and a plan of the best means of affording them effectual redress. In the course of his speech, the noble Lord passed some severe strictures on the unsatisfactory and contradictory views given of the insurrection of the 23rd of July: at one time it was represented as a

miserable contemptible riot; at other times it was described as a widely-extended, and formidable plan of rebellion. He did not pretend to decide which of these representations was correct; but he called the attention of their Lordships to them, as an additional proof of the necessity of inquiry. If, on a subject of this notorious kind, there was a difference of opinion, — if even his Majesty's ministers were not agreed on the subject, — he really could not figure to himself a more decisive argument to establish the necessity of a general systematic inquiry into the state of Ireland.

THE IRISH BANK RESTRICTION BILL.

(March 5. 1804.)

Lord King rose to state several observations, which he felt it his duty to do, as he had reason to hope they would be not wholly without their use, although he should not formally resist the motion. The discussion which had already taken place on this important subject had, he was persuaded, produced much benefit. The principles he had frequently submitted to their Lordships, were of that nature that the more they were examined the more conviction they carried with them, and so imperious was their necessity, in the present circumstances of the nation, that he could not be too urgent with their Lordships to give them their serious and repeated consideration. The state of Ireland grew daily into a stronger proof of the accuracy of his former arguments. He would call on every noble Lord connected with that country to give testimony to the truth of that assertion. He

wished those noble Lords to lay before the House their own personal information on this subject; for it was his sincere desire that the real grounds of his anxiety should be as plain to their Lordships as to himself. The fact was, that the bank paper in Ireland was so depreciated as to be at a discount of 10 per cent. It was falling every day into more discredit. The consequent distress was scarcely to be imagined. All articles of consumption rose so rapidly, and distrust was so generally spread, that the evil was most truly alarming. He called upon any one conversant with the internal affairs of Ireland, to deny what he asserted. But there was a proof of the depreciation of bank paper that could not be refuted, in the conduct of his Majesty's officers in Ireland. They paid themselves their salaries and pensions at par. If the bank paper was good for that for which it was issued, why not take it themselves? No! for they know they must lose 10 per cent by it. If one of those officers had 100*l.* to receive, he knew it would produce him no more than 90*l.* if in bank paper; and, therefore, he took care to be paid at par. His Lordship contended, if this was reasonable because of the depreciation, that all other persons should be paid in like manner. Whoever were not so paid, were defrauded. The depreciation, however, was established by the fact of those officers being paid at par; if it were not otherwise notorious. And this depreciation was the result of the bank being restricted from paying its issues in cash. If it were not so, he would be glad to hear what beside occasioned it. He knew that attempts were made to account for it otherwise. It was said that the disturbed state of the country and the apprehension of invasion were the causes. But fact was against this reasoning. In the last war, when there was an open rebellion in Ireland, when a French army was in the country, and a French fleet off the coast, the

discount was only at 9 per cent., while in 1802, in time of peace, it was from 12 to 13 per cent. It is the quantity of paper issued by the Bank that is the cause. Those issues have been rising in their monthly proportion from the time the restriction took place. In the last year they had increased beyond those of the preceding year nearly 400,000*l.* They had increased, on the whole, to five times their amount at the time the Bank Restriction Bill first passed. But they could not increase, in this enormous disproportion without falling in their value. The reason is simple. There is no check against issuing bank notes beyond the real demand for them, that is to say, beyond that capital they represent when the transaction is fair, but their being convertible, at the pleasure of the holder, into gold at the Bank. This is a natural and inevitable check against improper issues; for, when such are attempted, the overflow of bank notes is apparent, the holders are alarmed, and go to the Bank and demand cash. The check is, therefore, perfect. The Bank finds this, and knows it cannot issue too many notes without the attempt recoiling on themselves. But, such is the delicate nature of this affair, that though this check is complete, no other can be found. Even the integrity of the directors themselves is no check; they cannot tell when the issues grow too large, if they are not convertible into cash. It was the custom of the Banks of England and Ireland to keep a certain quantity of cash to answer current demands. After the passing of the Bank Restriction Bill, they could replace that sum in their coffers by notes; for they must thenceforth pay notes with notes, and the money in their chests would produce interest. This compels an increased issue, and that depreciates the paper, and that again, by degrees, increases the issues. But there is no criterion by which to know when they get too far, because the overflow cannot be carried back

to the Bank for cash. He meant to say there was no simple criterion without danger. There was a criterion, indeed, but it was a dangerous one. The depreciation proves the disproportioned issues; but that it is slow in its operation as a proof, the fact, at present, too plainly proved. The Directors, therefore, themselves meaning perfectly justly, may be very long before they discover that they have made too large issues. But, if there could be fraud supposed, to what ruinous extremes might not issues be carried? There being no criterion of their excess but the disappearing of gold, and the depreciation of the notes, the palpable discovery of the excess and the total annihilation of the notes might be one and the same act. It was not to be forgotten that the first depreciation of the notes was the only slow operation in this kind of transaction. After the first, the depreciation goes on rapidly, till they may suddenly crumble to dust, as has been seen in many instances, which their Lordships would easily call to mind. He, therefore, conceived this to be a subject too weighty for their Lordships to treat it otherwise than with the most solemn consideration. He did not mean to impute wrong to the motives of the Irish bank directors, for those enormous issues he had remarked. Their private characters were unimpeached. But he must say, they were extremely reprehensible in their public capacity, for the excess of the issues. Every man in Ireland who received 100*l.* was robbed, by the operation of that excess, of 10*l.*, while the bank proprietors were the only gainers by this system. Having no call for cash they may employ their capital, producing interest; and their excess of paper producing interest also; thus they had increased their dividend one per cent. within the last year, and the price of their stock was continually increasing. He had on a former occasion proposed that the Bank of Ireland should be compelled

to pay their notes in Bank of England notes; had this been adopted, there would not have been this discount on Bank of Ireland notes. The Bank of Scotland are compelled to pay in Bank of England notes, and their notes are at par. It would be the same with the Irish Bank, if it was under the same compulsion. It had been said that, to obtain Bank of England notes it must purchase them with gold; and, therefore, to compel it to pay in those notes was to compel it to pay in gold. But he denied that. The Irish Bank would purchase the Bank of England notes with bills of exchange, as all other articles of merchandise are bought; the sole effect would be to make the notes of the two banks convertible into each other, which they ought to be,—and, therefore, to prevent the Bank of Ireland notes being at a discount. There was another great evil occasioned by the overflow of Bank of Ireland notes, which fell chiefly on the labouring classes of people; this was the forgery of these notes. To such length had this gone, that no person in the interior and remote parts of Ireland would take a bank note without the person's name, who had it, being indorsed on it. But of what use was this to the ignorant labourer in Connaught, who could not read? If his note was forged with which he went to buy bread, he could not read the names of those who seemed to stand as his pledges for the validity. The loss of forged notes, therefore, fell chiefly on the very poorest of the people. On the whole, his Lordship maintained that the present bill created all those evils he had stated, especially the depreciation of the bank notes, and the rate of exchange with this country. Of this latter he would give one more eminent proof. In a quarter where the bank notes had not yet got into a general circulation, in the north of Ireland, exchange was at par, or, he believed, something above par. He should not

move the clause in the Committee to which he had alluded; but there were clauses in the bill on which he would take occasion to offer some observations.

DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY.

(March 8. 1805.)

Lord King rose, and observed, he thought that no apology was necessary for calling the attention of that House to the subject upon which he had announced his intention to bring forward a motion; its intrinsic importance and great magnitude, were so evident as obviously to render anything of the kind unnecessary. In discussing a subject the nature of which was equally extensive, various, and important, a variety of arguments and considerations founded on the multiplicity of facts, presented themselves to his mind; but among those which struck him as the most prominent and forcible, was the contradictory nature, as well as the great inefficacy of the different measures of the two last sessions, for ameliorating the military system, and augmenting the military force of the country. The perusal of these, he thought, would be sufficient to convince every discerning and unprejudiced mind of the total absence of all system, regularity, and connexion, in the various measures which had been devised. It was impossible, from the consideration of the acts alluded to, to collect that even the intention of the framers was to create a disposable force in the country. Neither in the plans which had been adopted, or in the course of their execution, could such an object or intention be traced. In the measures which had been suggested, there was nothing like order,

regularity, or system; every step that had been taken, added to the difficulties, and departed wider from the attainment of the proposed object. Such was the conduct of the government on these occasions, that it reminded him of the situation of an unfortunate man plunged into an abyss of difficulty and distress, who was glad to catch at, or lay hold of, everything that presented itself, however slight and powerless, in order to extricate himself. His Lordship then proceeded to a detailed consideration of the subject, and first adverted to the measures of increasing the militia, and the creation of what was called the Army of Reserve, the prominent effects of which were to raise the bounties to an extravagantly high rate, and which eventually enhanced the difficulties in procuring the men. In point of financial economy, this measure was to be strongly reprobated, as it gave, in the first instance, an extravagantly high premium to men to engage for limited service, and caused, necessarily, to be superadded a large additional bounty to enlist them for general service. He then proceeded to the consideration of the ballot system, which, in the mode it was carried on, he highly censured, particularly its effects upon the agricultural concerns of the country, and the irregularity of its operation, by which one county was oppressed to supply the deficiencies of another. Taking this part of the subject in another point of view, it was equally exceptionable; for it would be found, that the number of men procured by the ballots for personal service was next to nothing. To illustrate this position, he could not do more than refer to what he deemed an unquestionable authority upon the subject, viz. a printed speech of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which, speaking of the numbers procured by the ballots, he estimates the whole at 40,000, out of which 2000 were obtained for personal service, and the remaining very dispro-

portionate number of 38,000 men were hired substitutes. This consideration alone, the Noble Lord thought sufficient to overthrow any arguments that might be urged in favour of the Army of Reserve. Adverting to the line of argument adopted by ministers whenever subjects like the present were discussed, and particular parts of their system pointedly objected to, he observed, their mode of defence was, not to answer or obviate the objections fairly or separately, but to refer to the aggregate amount of the whole military force, in which care was always taken to include the volunteers. This he deemed a fallacious mode of defence, and not calculated to obviate objections which were too well founded. The merits of the question at issue, even admitting of the correctness of the official documents laid before Parliament, were decidedly in favour of his conclusions. By these, he contended, it would appear, that the infantry force, by far the most important, particularly in a disposable line, so far from being augmented, had actually decreased last year; he alluded to the infantry force in Great Britain; this might be seen by a reference to what was stated as the amount of the infantry in January 1804, and what it was by the latest returns of the present year. In referring to these, as well as to some accounts respecting the land forces in an early period of the late war, viz. 1794, he observed, that though the aggregate force, including cavalry and foreign troops, was augmented, to an amount exceeding 11,000, yet, as he contended, the British infantry were 800 less. To this was to be added another consideration, namely, that a comparatively small part of this infantry force was for general service: the amount of those who were enlisted for general service did not exceed 53,000 men: this was not all; these men, from the terms of their engagements, might be sent out of the country; but, under its present circumstances, would it be

prudent to send the whole or any part of that number? In fact, could they be spared? Certainly not. Proceeding to the consideration of the Additional Force Bill, he observed, a sufficient number of men were not raised by it, to supply even the casualties of the army. After dwelling shortly upon this consideration, he observed, that a particular regulation might be introduced, and with the greatest facility, into our military system, which would be attended with the most beneficial consequences; he meant the abolition of the practice of enlisting men into the army for life; for the continuance of such a practice, he thought no argument could possibly be advanced. There was nothing that could make men's minds revolt from entering into the military service of their country, but the idea, that, by so doing, they made a surrender of their personal liberties for life, without the possibility of retracting. Let their lordships look to the system of all the great military powers on the continent, with none of these the practice of enlisting soldiers for life obtained, but in no country whatever was the abolition of such a practice more loudly called for than in Great Britain; and not a more effectual remedy could be found to prevent desertion, than giving the men an assurance, that at a given time they might have their discharge. Under the present system, the astonishment was not that so few men were procured, but that so many could be obtained. Another great objection to men's freely entering into the army, was the apprehension of their being sent to the West India Islands. On this head, he should be glad to hear, whether there was any fixed rule for sending out corps by rotation; he was afraid not, but should be happy to learn that he was mistaken. In this part of the subject another consideration presented itself, which, if well executed, might be carried into effect. He meant a well-regulated plan for as well as an extension of the number

of the black corps, for the purpose of colonial service. He was aware, to a certain degree, of the obstacles which the jealousy of the planters and others in these colonies presented. In fact, the most of these were adverse to seeing the blacks in any other state than a state of slavery. Under the present regulations of these corps, they were of very little service; in these, a commission was regarded only as a step towards promotion: at first, commands in these were only given to officers who had served in the West Indies, but that salutary rule was not long followed; however, he was of opinion, that this part of the military force could be rendered of essential service, under proper regulations. Another point was, the extravagantly high rate of living in these quarters, which should in some degree be countenanced by a certain increase of pay. Judicious means should also be taken to counteract the prevalence of those dangerous maladies which were incidental to those climates. Adverting to the defensive military force of the country, he observed it was, not long since, deemed to be in that weak and alarming state, as to be the principal cause of a change in the executive administration; and the greatest hopes were entertained of the vigour and efficacy of the measures of the new ministers. These, however, might be classed into two heads; the first, the appointment of an extensive staff of brigadiers; what the aggregate amount of this new expense was he did not know; but he believed it was taken at 2,500*l.* for each staff. The second was the Additional Force Bill, the merits of which were recently discussed by their Lordships; this measure was so happily framed, that the effects produced by it were perfectly foreign from its professed objects. It was to be regarded rather as a measure of finance, than one of military regulation. On this head his Lordship went into some detailed calculation, and particularly dwelt upon the

comparative small number of men which were procured by the parish officers. The measure was, at best, inefficacious; it was, in some parts of its operations, oppressive and unjust; and being hitherto productive of no one benefit, though it was in activity for ten months, including those the most favourable for its operation, there existed no reasonable ground to expect it would prove beneficial or serviceable in future. He would detain their Lordships no longer, but conclude with moving, "that a committee be appointed to revise the different acts passed, in the two last sessions of parliament, for the military defence of the country; and to consider of such further measures as may be necessary to make that defence more complete and permanent."

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ON FOREIGN CORPS.

(April 12. 1810.)

Lord King said, that if any apology was necessary for his introducing this subject, it would be found in the Act of the 44th of the King, relative to the introduction of foreign troops into the country. It was only within the last ten years that foreign troops had been stationed in the country, without even the pretext of any immediate fear of invasion; and particularly that foreign generals had been employed on

the staff in this country. Such had been the constitutional jealousy upon this subject previously entertained, that it was only upon particular emergencies, and under special circumstances, that foreign troops were allowed to enter the country. By the Act of the 29th Geo. II. a corps of this description had been formed for service in America, but it was specially enacted that the colonel should be a natural-born subject of his Majesty. Subsequently there was an act made to allow of certain Hessian and Hanoverian troops remaining in the country, then under the fear of invasion. In the American war, also, there had been a communication made to parliament, on the subject of Hessian and Hanoverian troops coming into the country, and an act was specially passed. In all these acts, however, the greatest caution was used, and the most watchful constitutional jealousy appeared. But within the last ten years a system of employing foreign troops, and foreign generals, had grown up, which he could not but consider as highly unconstitutional and improper. By the Act of the 44th of the King, the employment of regiments of foreign troops in the country to a limited extent was legalised, and also the appointment of foreign officers therein; the reason assigned for which was, that the troops might have officers acquainted with their manners and language. This was a perfectly good and intelligible reason, but it was evident, from the continued use of the word in the provisions of that act, that the act was only intended to apply to, and authorise, the appointment of foreign regimental officers, and not to the employment of foreign generals. And he could not but consider that the employment of foreign generals in Great Britain could only be sanctioned by a strained and forced construction of the act, which, the object of it as designated in the preamble could by no means warrant. It was true there were

general words towards the conclusion of the act, the meaning of which was doubtful; but if they were to be construed to authorise the appointment of foreign generals, as at present, upon the staff, they must be taken to go much farther, and to sanction the appointment of a foreigner to any military office, even that of commander-in-chief. Nay, (and he threw this out for the serious consideration of the noble Lords opposite) his Majesty might, under this construction of the act, appoint a catholic commander-in-chief, provided that catholic was an alien. He observed that this act passed on the 16th of July, a period of the session when little or no attention could be paid to it, and when it was probably not considered with any deliberation adequate to its importance. Their Lordships were aware that, by the Act of Settlement, the appointment of a foreigner to any place of trust or profit under the crown was rendered illegal. Previous to that act, in the early part of the reign of William III., there had been some distinguished foreigners employed as generals in the British service, particularly Marshal Schomberg, who held a high command in Ireland. The Act of Settlement, however, rendered that practice illegal, and it so continued, unless it was to be considered as legalised by the general words of the Act of the 44th of the King, to which he had referred. He could not but consider the appointment of foreign generals on the staff as highly objectionable, and more peculiarly so, that they should have the command of districts, and thereby have the command of British generals and our native troops. There appeared also to be a very improper partiality shown towards these foreign troops and generals. It appeared, on the face of the returns, that the expense of the foreign cavalry was stated at 47*l.* per man, while that of our own cavalry amounted to only 44*l.* per man. In the account

likewise of the charges for recruiting, there appeared a great disproportion, the charge being 145,000*l.* for our own troops, amounting to 174,000 men; whilst in the estimate for recruiting the foreign troops the charge was 50,000*l.* for only 23,000 men. With respect to the foreign officers also, it appeared that the whole of those who were on the staff were either colonels, or lieutenant-colonels on half-pay; and it was known that, by a regulation, those officers on half-pay who were appointed on the staff lost their half-pay, while those who were in full pay retained it. He had thought it right to call their Lordships' attention to this subject, conceiving as he did that the employment of such a number of foreign troops was in these times extremely impolitic, if not highly dangerous. Many of them were natives of countries now under the dominion of the enemy, and might have to fight against their countrymen in the service of the enemy. This was a situation in which men ought not to be placed. It was holding out a great temptation to them, whilst, on the other hand, they could have no interest in the welfare of the country which they served, and but little even in its political independence. He was, however, chiefly desirous of taking up the question upon a constitutional ground; and in this point of view he could not but consider it as highly unconstitutional that foreign generals should be employed in the country, and still more, that they should be appointed to the command of districts where they had the command of our own national troops. His Lordship concluded by moving a resolution declaratory of the impropriety of thus employing foreign generals.

ON THE SECOND READING OF EARL STANHOPE'S BILL RESPECTING GUINEAS AND BANK NOTES.

(July 2. 1811.)

My Lords,

Entertaining strong and decided opinions on the subject of paper currency, which I have never lost any opportunity of expressing, both in my place in this House and by every other means in my power, I have always been ready to discuss the subject in general, and naturally feel, at present, most anxious to justify my own conduct, in consequence of the charges which, on a late debate, have, in my absence, been made against me.

Under these circumstances, I must crave your Lordships' pardon, if I feel compelled to speak of myself, and of my private concerns, in an assembly where such topics in general are so improper; but the course of the late debate renders that detail imperative on me; and, indeed, the question has assumed that shape that it cannot be treated otherwise than by dividing it into two principal parts: 1st, my individual conduct; and, 2d, the general subject of the present depreciated currency of the country, and the alarming projects held out of destroying the ancient standard of value, and of subverting the basis, and denomination, of the lawful money of the realm.

I shall therefore proceed to state plainly, and explicitly, my reasons for refusing at this time to receive bank-notes at their nominal value in certain cases, and to avail myself of the remedy provided by the law. Since the late decision in the House of

Commons, it appears to be the declared intention of the Government that the restriction shall continue to the end of the war, however distant that period may be. The subject is thus brought home to the individual interest of every man whose property is yearly, even monthly, deteriorated in consequence of the unnatural state of the currency of the country. Under these circumstances, therefore, I have thought this the proper time to make a stand in defence of my property, and to endeavour to protect myself from further spoliation and injury.

During the last twelve years, we have seen the depreciation of bank notes progressively advancing in the most alarming manner; and every hope and prospect of amelioration being destroyed by the recent resolution of the House of Commons, there appeared to remain no other choice than either to submit with tame and patient resignation to receive payment in currency, of whatever value it shall please the Bank of England, in their forbearance and moderation, to permit henceforth to belong to the currency of the country; or to have recourse to the remedy which individuals possess by law, and which I shall hereafter show has been purposely allowed and secured to them by the law. There is also another reason, which, I confess, has had some influence with me in this determination. It was asked, insultingly, in another place, whether any person had ever yet ventured to refuse bank paper in payment or satisfaction of a lawful debt; and, on that foundation, it was attempted to be argued that, in point of fact, there existed no difference in value between paper and gold, and no actual depreciation. By bringing this question to issue, at least one of the remaining wretched supports of this fatal system will be overthrown. In this state of things, for the defence of my property, I have thought it advisable, in the

management of my private concerns, to inform my tenants holding lands under old leases, and under old leases only, that I can no longer continue to receive bank-notes at their nominal value in payment or satisfaction for such contracts; and I am now prepared to assert, not the bare legality, for that is unquestionable, but, what I am much more anxious to prove, the justice and equity of the course I have thought myself obliged to adopt. The plain broad principle upon which I have acted is, to require payment in a currency of the same intrinsic value which the currency possessed at the date of each respective agreement; and, in order to ascertain this intrinsic value, I calculate the amount of gold which the stipulated rent was able to purchase at the date of the lease or agreement, and require the same weight of gold, or a sum in bank-notes sufficient to purchase that quantity of gold at the present time. I offer this alternative as an accommodation to the tenant, in case he makes the option of paying in paper money, instead of fulfilling his agreement by payment of his rent in the lawful gold coin of the kingdom.

The following is a copy of the notice: — "By the lease, dated 1807, you have contracted to pay the annual rent of 100*l.* in good and lawful money of Great Britain. In consequence of the late great depreciation of paper money, I can no longer consent to receive bank-notes at their nominal value, in payment or satisfaction of an *old* contract. I must therefore desire you to provide for the payment of your rent in the legal gold coin of the realm. At the same time, having no other object than to secure payment of the real intrinsic value of the sum stipulated by agreement, and being desirous to avoid giving you any unnecessary trouble, I shall be willing to receive payment in either of the modes following,

according to your option: first, in guineas; secondly, if guineas cannot be procured, by payment of Portugal gold coin, equal in weight to the number of guineas requisite to discharge the rent; or, thirdly, by the payment in bank-notes of a sum sufficient to purchase the weight of standard gold requisite to discharge the rent. The alteration of the value of paper money is estimated in this manner: The price of gold in 1807, the year of your agreement, was 4*l.* 2*s.* per ounce; the present market price is 4*l.* 14*s.*, arising from the further depreciation of the value of paper; in that proportion an addition of 14*l.* 12*s.* 8*d.* per cent. in paper money will be required as the equivalent for the payment of rent."

In the above instance there is a difference of 14*l.* 12*s.* 8*d.* per cent. in the currency between the year 1807 and the present time. In the case of an agreement dated 1796, when the market price of gold did not exceed the Mint price, because the currency was then in a pure and perfect state, the difference between the payment in gold or in paper money amounts to the whole of the actual depreciation of the currency at this day; and if the market price of gold was 4*l.* 14*s.* on the 10th of May, when the calculation was made, it follows that, in the proportion of 3*l.* 18*s.* the Mint price of gold, to 4*l.* 14*s.* the present market price, 100*l.* will give 120*l.* 9*s.* The principle being thus clearly stated, the only dispute which can arise, as to the equity and fair dealing of the transaction, must proceed from a doubt as to the correctness of the data on which the calculation is founded. The prices of bullion at the different periods are taken, as far as they can be collected, from the returns made by the Mint to the House of Commons, as far as they reach; and since the 5th of March, 1811 the price of gold is taken from Wettenhall's Prices-Current, the same source

from which the officers of the Mint derive their information: if there is any error, it is therefore open to correction.

Where, may I ask, is the hardship of this demand? The price of the produce of land, the price of labour, the price of every great staple commodity, are all affected by the value of the currency, which serves to circulate the wealth and industry of the country. In proportion as the currency is depreciated, the price of wheat, of cattle, of all the produce of the land, and of every commodity, is augmented. Of course it must always be understood, that in all cases the price of every thing whatever is regulated by the supply and the demand, and, when so determined, is afterwards affected by every variation in the intrinsic value of the currency by which they are circulated. The covenants of a lease secure the payment of rent in the lawful money of Great Britain (these are the express words of the contract): the lawful money of Great Britain contains a certain known weight of gold of a certain known fineness of standard; and if bank-notes, from any cause whatever, will no longer purchase that weight of gold which, according to the regulation of the Mint, ought to be contained in a certain given sum of lawful money, they will no longer fulfil an old contract according to the spirit and essence of the agreement.

In the case of a contract made for a fixed sum at a distant period, under the uncertainty and irregularity of a paper currency not convertible into gold at the will of the holder, the only equitable course for both parties to adopt appears to be, to ascertain the quantity of bullion which a pound note of the common currency was able to command at the date of the agreement, and for every pound of rent, or interest, or principal sum due, to require the same quantity of bullion, or the amount of debased currency sufficient

to purchase that quantity of bullion. This is the true and equitable payment and satisfaction of such contract. On every sound principle of law and equity, the landlord is entitled to receive the real intrinsic value of the stipulated sum, in good and lawful money; or at least in currency equal in value to the currency at the date of the contract. He is strictly in law entitled to the legal gold coin of the realm, if such is the condition and obligation of the contract; as matter of favour and concession, he may consent to receive his payment in any other shape, for the convenience or relief of the party bound to the fulfilment of a contract; but a payment in a debased paper currency is a payment in name only, and not in reality. It formed no part of the stipulation of the bond; there is no limitation to the extent to which a loss, proceeding from that cause, may be carried. To put an extreme case, which no man can assert to be impossible, because in another country it has actually been exceeded: a note of one pound may not be worth or pass current for more than one shilling, consequently all commodities would be advanced to twenty times their former value. In a case so palpable, it would be impossible for any one to imagine that a payment, in such degraded currency, would be in any sense a satisfaction for a contract concluded before the depreciation of the currency had taken place. It would be impossible to deny, that by such a payment the landlord would be defrauded of nineteen parts out of twenty of his just demand.

In order to prevent any misconception and false statement of my conduct, I take this opportunity of openly stating, that so far from taking any undue advantage, by making in this year, or last year, or at any time, an agreement for land at a greatly advanced rent, calculated on the advanced price of all produce in consequence of the debased state of the paper cur-

rency, and then taking advantage of the law, and calling on a tenant, under such circumstances, to pay in gold, or the value in gold, equal in fact to an addition of twenty per cent. at the present market price of gold, — I am, on the contrary, ready to reprobate such conduct, as most unfair and unjustifiable. My conduct has been totally different; I have strictly abstained from making any such demand, or from requiring a compensation for any alteration in the value of the currency for two or near three years, though such alteration is not inconsiderable. I shall continue to receive payment in bank-notes until, by a further depreciation, the notes, at some future period, shall become visibly and sensibly deteriorated below their actual value at the date of the leases in question; I shall then expect to receive that difference, if any, whatever it may be. And farther, I am prepared to say, that in the unexpected event of the restoration of the currency to an improved state, I shall be perfectly satisfied to receive such rents, diminished in proportion to the improvement of the currency at any future period, compared with the currency at the date of such leases. For all land let to tenants at will I shall continue to receive bank-notes, conceiving the land to be let for the price of the times, or that I have at least the power of obtaining, if I please, the fair price of the times.

To place this subject in a clearer light, and to remove any remaining prejudice respecting the oppression or hardship of the proceeding, it may be useful to explain the nature of rent. Rent is generally defined to be the value of that part of the gross produce of a farm which remains after making full allowance for all expenses, taxes, and profit of capital employed by the farmer in cultivation. The gross produce is generally supposed to be divided into four shares, three of which are allotted for the above purposes,

and one for the rent: this last portion is then estimated at the average price of produce during some preceding years, and thus converted into a money price for the mutual convenience of both landlord and tenant.

But the effect of the depreciation of the currency is to augment the price of all the four shares of the gross produce of the farm, of those which are to defray the expenses, as well as of that portion from which the rent is supplied. It will be found that the tenant suffers no loss, if he is required to make only an equitable compensation, equivalent to the depreciation of the currency; he has already received an advance in the sale of his produce; he is only prevented from acquiring an additional profit, to which he can have no just claim. To any increase of price, in consequence of the increasing opulence and prosperity of the country, the tenant is in every sense justly entitled: the two causes of increased price are totally distinct; the one arises from the fair increased demand and consumption of the country, which may well have entered into the calculation of the amount of rent; the other proceeds from an anomaly in the currency, which never could have entered into the contemplation of the parties.

I presume it will not be denied, that paper currency is in its nature liable to depreciation, after having witnessed the example of so many countries on the continent, of the assignats in France, of the paper-money of Sweden, of Portugal, and the most recent instance of Austria. The symptoms of depreciation have manifested themselves unequivocally in this country; they are apparent in the advanced price of bullion keeping pace with the excessive issue of notes, in the unfavourable exchange, and in the general rise in the price of all commodities. The average price of wheat, which, from the year 1771 to

1785, was 46*s.*; and from 1786 to 1797 was 52*s.*; has since that period, which it must be remembered was also that of the bank-restriction, increased in a very different ratio. In the twelve years, from 1798 to 1810 (omitting 1800 and 1801, years of dearth), the average price of wheat for England and Wales has amounted to 71*s.* the quarter. At the price of 52*s.* the quarter, it required eighteen quarters of wheat to purchase a pound weight of gold, which, by the Mint is coined into 44½ guineas. It appears, that during five years, beginning in the year 1802 and ending in 1806, the average price of wheat was 70*s.*; and as in the same years the mean price of gold bullion was nearly 4*l.* 2*s.* per ounce, or 49*l.* 4*s.* per pound, it required fourteen quarters and half a bushel of wheat, at 70*s.*, to purchase a pound of gold at that market price of bullion. During the last five years, 85*s.* a quarter may be stated as the average price of wheat, and the mean price of gold has been nearly 4*l.* 7*s.* per ounce, or 52*l.* 4*s.* per lb.: it required therefore only twelve quarters and two bushels of wheat, at the price of eighty-five shillings, to purchase a pound of gold, even at the advanced rate of gold during these five years.

It may be inferred from the highly advanced prices of wheat, compared with former times, and particularly its rapid increase since 1797, that the paper currency has suffered a material alteration of value. But from this examination of the relative value existing between corn and gold bullion, after making great allowance for the advance in the price of wheat in consequence of an increased demand, it may also be suspected that the supply of gold itself has been likewise very considerably increased; or, in other words, that the real price of gold has been most sensibly diminished. This view of the subject has convinced me of the propriety of not submitting any

longer to the loss which arises from the present great inferiority of the value of the note to that of gold, seeing that the gold itself, compared with the best standard of value, has in all probability become really much cheaper and more abundant than at any former time. It must be kept in view, that payment in gold is the condition of the obligation, and that, in most instances, the option proposed is much to the advantage of the tenant, and intended as an equitable modification and abatement of the legal demand. In the North of Ireland it is not unusual to require rents to be paid in specie, and the effect has been to retain the gold coin in those districts where that practice continues.

Having acted on principles such as I have described, and being satisfied with my own conduct, I shall not be deterred by clamour, or by any imputation whatever, by which it may be attempted to prevent me from insisting, at the same time with firmness and moderation, on a just and legal demand. It may suit the interest of some persons, by such unworthy means to attempt to put down that, which they hesitate and fear to do by legislative interference, notwithstanding the facility with which, of late years, acts of Parliament have been passed to suit the convenience or inconvenience of the moment. It was attempted in France to intimidate individuals who preferred the good metallic money to worthless assignats, by branding them with the charge of incivism, or incivic practices, in the revolutionary phrase; and, to judge from the language of his Majesty's servants, who are endeavouring to inculcate the acceptance of paper money as a moral and political duty, we are here also to be governed according to the true Jacobin doctrine, which required individuals to regulate their conduct, not by their own proper interest and convenience, but according to some speculative

principles. In a well-regulated state, the proper interest of individuals is inseparable from that of the government; and it is the duty of government to take care to avoid any system or state of things in which individuals, pursuing their own interest, and acting legally, shall have the appearance of acting at variance with the public interest. If the notes of the Bank of England are not depreciated in value, and if, in fact, there is no difference between paper and gold, the preference given to the latter will be an idle preference, of no public inconvenience, because it will not be followed. If the value of the bank paper is really at par, it is not in the power of any individual to alter the fact; and any attempt to do so would be despised as it deserved: but if, on the contrary, the bank paper is greatly inferior in value to gold coin and bullion, it is highly meritorious to expose and resist a system through which the whole community is impoverished and defrauded.

I must desire to be informed by what new rule, by what new order of things, an individual is bound to account in parliament for his conduct in the management of his private affairs: if he has claimed his right only, it is his by law; and if he has demanded more than his right, the poorest man in the country may have redress against him.

Having now, my Lords, as I conceive, proved the justice of my conduct by a statement irresistible in a court of equity, I shall proceed to the other part of the subject, and I shall, in the first place, endeavour to show that in the year 1797 the law respecting legal tender was by design left without alteration. The legislature, contemplating the inconvenience to which individuals were exposed by the Bank-restriction, took away the power of arrest: as long as the value of gold and paper money was equal, there was no temptation to insist on gold; but if gold was

demanded, the debtor had it in his power to buy bullion, and take it to be coined at the Mint, the law, in the mean time, protecting him from arrest. The legislature, when it sanctioned the Bank-restriction in 1797, most assuredly never contemplated the depreciation of the currency as now existing to so great an extent. The association agreement, to receive bank notes, entered into by the members of the privy council, and the great merchants and bankers in London, was perfectly voluntary; it was entered into on the presumption that the currency was then, and would continue to remain at the full standard of value. At that time it was little expected that the Bank of England note of one pound, which had always been able to command a certain weight of standard bullion, would ever be so reduced in value as to contain sixteen shillings and seven-pence only, instead of twenty shillings, its former intrinsic value; a defalcation of three shillings and five-pence in the pound on all fixed income, a privation much greater than the income tax, the heaviest burden ever imposed at once on any country. That at least is paid for the public service; but is it to be endured, that a bank tax of near double the income tax shall be taken from the income of individuals, not for the public service, but for the sole gain and benefit of that corporation? I am almost tempted to say, (if the Bank is so accustomed to the vast gains it has acquired, by the continuance of the restriction, that it will not consent to forego them,) that the government would make a provident bargain by paying five or six hundred thousand pounds annually to the Bank, stipulating, in return, that the Bank should reduce the quantity of notes in circulation until their intrinsic value was restored.

Some step must be taken to put an end to all the manifest injuries, both public and private, arising

from the depreciation of the currency. To consider it in one point of view, the public expenditure this year of ninety millions is equivalent to seventy-four millions only of currency of the former standard; but as the interest due to the public creditor is a fixed sum, the extraordinary expense incurred in this single year, in consequence of the state of the currency, has been little short of ten millions sterling. It is now evident that it will be found impossible to avoid augmenting the pay of the army, of the navy, of all the servants of the government, unless you speedily interpose and take effectual measures to restore the value of the currency.

In Portugal and Sicily, the loss incurred by government, from the adverse exchange in the last year, is not less than twenty per cent. on all money remitted to those countries; and it is in vain to attempt to conceal the fact, that the expenses of the government at home, in the supplies for the navy and for the ordnance, are all equally augmented. The only advantages, indeed, which the government derive from the continuance of the Bank-restriction, are some certain accommodations which it receives from the Bank in discounting exchequer bills and government securities, and the shameful profit of defrauding the public creditor, by compelling him to receive payment in depreciated paper money. It has sometimes been argued, that the value of gold, by some unusual circumstances, has of late years greatly increased; and it is contended that gold, which is the common standard and measure of value in all parts of the world, is not in this country the best suited for that purpose, or at all comparable in certainty and steadiness to the standard value of the Bank of England note. On examination it will be found that this alleged dearness of gold depends entirely on the commodity which you have to give in exchange for

it. It is perfectly true, that if you have only bank paper to give in exchange, the gold is extremely dear in the exact proportion as the paper to be given in exchange is become cheap; but if you have corn or labour, which have been considered as the most perfect standard of value, it will be found that gold is really much cheaper than at any former time, as less labour and less corn will now command the same weight of gold. The same result will be found to take place universally in every quarter of the globe. In France, the money prices of all commodities appear to have risen one fifth since the revolution. In every country it will be found that the prices of commodities, of food, and of labour, have risen, or, what is the same thing, that gold has in fact fallen in value. That the supply of gold imported into England is very large, may be seen from the evidence of the greatest bullion merchants in London, who say you may procure any quantity, provided you will pay the price. It is farther said, that all the gold in England is clandestinely exported to France in payment for corn, which we must of necessity procure, and which they will not consent to give us except in exchange for gold. It is perfectly true, not only that the exports, but the imports of gold, are in much larger quantities than at any antecedent period. All the bullion, which in the shape of tribute, and in the ordinary course of commerce, flowed constantly from Spain and Portugal into France, and through France to the other parts of the Continent, has now, from the total interruption of all intercourse, ceased to be carried in that direction.

A new and more easy channel has been discovered by which the produce of the gold mines of South America can be distributed over the continent of Europe; the more open communication and intercourse which has lately taken place between Great

Britain and the Spanish and Portuguese settlements in South America, has opened a new road, through this country, for the passage of the precious metals from the New World, where they abound, to the Old Continent, which does not produce them. That this is the new course of commerce is obvious from the state of our commercial relations with, and easy access to, South America; it must be so in the present state of the world. It follows, of course, that the gold must be cheaper in this country than in other countries to which it is afterwards exported; it is in the nature of things that it must be dearer in France, by all the expense of transport, risk, and insurance, which is incurred by the export of bullion.

The proposal of introducing an alteration of the law of legal tender, which has been intimated with a view, I suppose, of feeling the way before so dangerous an innovation of the general rules of law and justice shall be openly avowed, is the most pernicious and destructive ever ventured to be made by the wildest theorist in any civilised country. All the fatal consequences of such a measure, once carried into execution, no man can possibly foresee. But of this we may be well assured, that it threatens to subvert the whole system of the political economy of the country; that it will overturn all fixed and certain standards of value, and totally destroy the spirit and meaning of all contracts and engagements between man and man. By such an act you at once declare bank notes to be a *forced* paper currency, no longer resting on the basis of voluntary circulation; you will proclaim to the world that your bank notes are *assignats* to all intents and purposes, differing in degree only, and not in kind. Mr. Burke, when contrasting the paper money of England with the assignats in France, describes them as powerful on the Exchange, because impotent in Westminster Hall.

How little did that great man imagine, when he was describing the horrible system of the French assignats, that he was also drawing the future picture of his own country!

A forced paper currency, once established by law, will leave no means of retreat; it will advance thenceforward with rapid strides towards that horrible system of finance which ruined millions in France; if once you start on the same course, you must inevitably run the same race. Your enactments must be either ineffectual or intolerably tyrannical. The symptoms of rapid depreciation have already unequivocally appeared, and a legislative enactment, vainly intended to support the value of your paper money, will prove here, as infallibly as it has proved in all other countries where the same fatal measure has been adopted, the immediate forerunner of the last crisis of the paper system.

Against such a monstrous proceeding we have the authority of Mr. Pitt himself. We have also the authority of judges in Westminster Hall. In the Court of Common Pleas, upon a question whether bank notes were made a legal tender by the Restriction Act, Mr. Justice Heath held this language: "Whatever inconveniences may arise, the courts of law cannot apply a remedy. I think, indeed, the legislature acted wisely, having the recent example of France before their eyes, to avoid making bank notes a legal tender; for in France we know that legislative provisions of that kind in favour of paper currency only tended to depreciate the paper it was designed to protect, and were ultimately repealed as injurious in their nature."*

We have, indeed, the experience and example of France as a warning to avoid the same calamities:

* Bosanquet and Puller's Reports, vol. ii. p. 526. Case of *Grigby* v. *Oakes*.

in support of the assignats, there was legislative interference, and penalties and terror ever ready at command, exercised with unrelenting severity and unceasing vigilance. But, I ask, did ever that system of terror stop the depreciation, or uphold the finances of France? Has the forced paper currency of Austria (the most recent instance) preserved the finances of that empire? on the contrary, their destruction is also nearly completed. It may be instructive to us to know what has been done in other countries, to modify and correct the disturbance of all contracts occasioned by the progressive depreciation of their respective currencies. In France and in Austria it has been found necessary to establish a rule for the equitable performance of contracts. When the frenzy of the revolution had subsided, the French government, after the destruction of their assignats and mandats, and the consequent re-appearance of metallic money, ascertained the value of the louis-d'or, as compared with assignats at different periods. When the louis of 24 livres purchased 600 livres in assignats, it is clear that an engagement made in assignats at that rate was 25 times the value in good money. When the louis was worth 1200 livres, a contract made in assignats was 50 times the value of the metallic money. And in this simple manner, according to any given market-price of the louis at a given time, contracts were reduced to their real value.

The remembrance of the assignats has, however, in a great degree put an end to leases in France; and if they are ever now made, the rent is stipulated to be paid in certain measures of corn. It may shortly be found necessary to have recourse to the same precaution in England. The practice has, no doubt, its inconveniences; no man can calculate the exact amount of his income for any particular year, because

it will depend on the seasons and the casual supply of that year: but if, instead of the money in which the rent is paid, actually containing or faithfully representing a fixed certain weight of gold of a certain standard, there shall be substituted a currency subject to depreciation, in that case the undefined loss will far outweigh any possible inconvenience, and the landlord in his own defence must again resort to the antiquated mode of former ages, and stipulate for a certain measure of the gross produce of the land.

It is said that some legislative interference is absolutely necessary to protect the tenants against the demand of their landlords, and on that account the bill is favourably received by those who profess to support the interests of the former. Little, indeed, do these men understand the interest of the tenant, who exhibit such total ignorance of the great and permanent interest of the agriculture of the country, to which the interest of the tenants and of those who follow agriculture as a profession is inseparably united. If once the impious breach is made in existing contracts, if once the legislature interferes with a violent hand, and tears out of the contract those positive stipulations, in faith of the due performance of which one of the parties has resigned and delivered over his valuable property, in the firm reliance that he shall be permitted to receive what he considered as a valuable equivalent, but which condition is afterwards totally abrogated by an *ex post facto* law, there is an end of all faith both in public and private transactions. No man can henceforth place his dependence on the faith of contracts; the lands must be occupied by yearly tenants, for no landlord, after so dreadful a lesson of legislative injustice, will assign his property for a fixed term to the chance of an uncertain value. There has already appeared a visible and general un-

willingness to agree to new leases for long terms; and any suspicion of the possibility of interference with existing contracts will extend that unwillingness to make leases even for the shortest periods.

My Lords, the difficulties of our situation have proceeded from long-continued legislative interference; from having deserted the old sound maxims and general rules: the farther you proceed in this course, the more difficult is your retreat. I well remember the emphatic words in which our present situation was described in a former debate in this House: it was forcibly said, "that legislative interference was heaped on legislative interference, difficulty was added to difficulty, until at last the original object lies overwhelmed and buried under the incumbent mass and rubbish of superadded matter." It is in vain to imagine that any interference can uphold the value of bank notes, if they are deficient in intrinsic worth, if less gold is given for the paper than that paper promises to pay. The attempt is against the natural order of things, and is pregnant with every mischief. Whatever may be the consequences, I am convinced the discussion must do good; the subject has been suffered to rest for several years, and by that neglect the depreciation has gradually and progressively advanced; and no possible effect arising from agitating this question, and bringing it to issue, can be so pernicious as the actual state of our degraded currency. In the year 1803 I opposed the Restriction Bill; I resisted it in Parliament, and endeavoured to expose the system, which I thought so injurious to all public and private interests. I foretold the consequences; and, having now unfortunately seen my opinion confirmed far beyond my expectation, of all men I am the last to be blamed if I have now had recourse to a remedy founded both in law and justice.

POSTSCRIPT.

Having so plainly stated the principle on which I expected those who had entered into contracts with me to discharge their engagements, I hardly thought it necessary to add, that I consider myself as under the same obligation to those who have demands upon me under any old contract or engagement. I take this opportunity of stating, that I not only hold myself bound and am ready to satisfy all such demands by payment of the same intrinsic value which the currency had at the date of each respective contract, but that I have already acted upon this principle in a payment of considerable amount.

The bill now before Parliament will place some impediments in the way of those who desire to carry into effect an equitable adjustment in the payment of old contracts; but methods may be devised for an equitable arrangement without much trouble or expense. For this purpose, ascertain the weight of standard gold which the currency was able to purchase at the date of the contract, and let the payment be made in the same weight of standard gold. Coined money was invented for the general convenience; but if it cannot easily be procured, payments may be made in uncoined bullion of the same standard.

For instance, if the price of gold at the date of the contract was 4*l.* 2*s.* per ounce, then, in the proportion of 4*l.* 2*s.* to 3*l.* 18*s.*, the Mint price, it will require the weight only of 95 guineas and $\frac{10}{82}$, as the equivalent for 100 guineas; and as that weight of standard gold may afterwards be sold at the market price, the landlord who receives it at that rate (an act of favour and concession on his part) will be indemnified for the increased depreciation of paper since the date of the contract, and at the same time will have regulated

the payment according to the intrinsic value of the currency at the date of the lease.

For all contracts made before any depreciation had taken place, it will of course require the weight of 100 guineas in standard gold to discharge a demand for 100 guineas; but if instead of standard bullion, a preference, for the sake of convenience, is given to Portugal gold coins (which, as an article of commerce in demand, are more valuable), an allowance may be made in proportion to their superior price in the market, requiring the weight of 98 guineas in such coin for 100 guineas due.

TABLE, to show the Real Value of a One-Pound Bank-Note at the Market Price of Gold.

Market Price of Gold per Ounce.			Real Value of Note.	
£	s.		s.	d.
3	18	- -	20	0
3	19	- -	19	$8\frac{7}{10}$
4	0	- -	19	6
4	1	- -	19	$3\frac{1}{10}$
4	2	- -	19	$0\frac{3}{10}$
4	3	- -	18	$9\frac{6}{10}$
4	4	- -	18	$6\frac{9}{10}$
4	5	- -	18	$4\frac{2}{10}$
4	6	10 per cent.	18	$1\frac{6}{10}$
4	7	- -	17	$11\frac{1}{10}$
4	8	- -	17	$8\frac{7}{10}$
4	9	- -	17	$6\frac{3}{10}$
4	10	- -	17	4
4	11	- -	17	$1\frac{7}{10}$
4	12	- -	16	$11\frac{4}{10}$
4	13	- -	16	$9\frac{2}{10}$
4	14	20 per cent.	16	$7\frac{2}{10}$
4	15	- -	16	$5\frac{1}{20}$
4	16	- -	16	3
4	17	- -	16	1
4	18	25 per cent.	15	11
4	19	- -	15	9
5	0	- -	15	$7\frac{2}{20}$
5	1	- -	15	$5\frac{3}{10}$
5	2	- -	15	$3\frac{6}{10}$
5	3	- -	15	$1\frac{7}{10}$
5	4	- -	15	0

TABLES, *showing the gradual Fall in the Value of Bank Notes, and the intrinsic Value of Money-contracts, at the different Periods of Depreciation; being a Supplement to Lord King's Speech upon Earl Stanhope's Bill.*

TABLE I.

Showing the Comparative Values of Bank Notes, Standard Gold, and Wheat, at the Period of the Bank Restriction, and in the subsequent Years.

Years.	Average Amount of Bank Notes in Circulation.	Price of Standard Gold Per Ounce.	Number of Guineas which 105*l.* was able to purchase according to the Market Price of Gold.	Real Value of a One-Pound Note.	Average Price of Wheat per Quarter for England and Wales.	Quarters of Wheat equal to purchase One Pound Troy Weight of Standard Gold coined into 44½ Guineas.
		£ s. d.	Gs.	s. d.	s. d.	
1797	- -	3 17 10½	100	20 0	53 1 } 52	18 Quarters.
1798	13,334,752	3 18 0	100	20 0	50 3 }	Gold 3*l.* 18*s.* per oz.
1799	14,062,327	3 18 0	100	20 0	67 6	medium Price.
1800	15,841,932	4 0 0	97½		113 7 } Years of	
1801	16,169,594	4 0 0	97½		118 3 } Dearth.	
1802	17,054,454	4 0 0	97½		67 5	14 Quarters and Half a Bushel.
1803	16,847,522	4 0 0	97½	19 6	56 6	Gold 4*l.* 2*s.* per oz.
1804	17,345,020	4 0 0	97½		60 1 } 70 av.	Mean Price.
1805	17,241,932	4 0 0	97½		87 10	Qrs. Bus. Gold at
1806	17,135,400	4 0 0	97½		79 0	13 3½ £4 2
1807	17,405,001	4 2 0	95 19/21	19 0	73 3	12 6 1/10 4 4
1808	17,534,580	4 4 0	92 72/84	18 6	79 0	10 7 9/10 4 8
1809	19,001,890	4 8 0	88 56/88	17 8 7/10	95 7	10 2¼ 4 11
1810	22,541,510	4 11 0	85 65/91	17 1 7/10	106 2	
1811	23,471,290	4 13 0	83 81/91	16 9 2/19	*	

* The great import of foreign corn in 1811 must diminish the price of the year, by adding so greatly to the supply.

TABLE II.

SCALE to ascertain the intrinsic Value of Contracts, at the Time of the Bank Restriction, and in subsequent Years, according to the Quantity of Gold which 105*l.* was able to command at different Periods, and showing the Depreciation subsequent to the Date of the Contract.

Years.	Market Price of Gold.	Number of Guineas 105*l.* was able to purchase.	Present Value of the No. of Guineas; Gold being at 4*l.* 13*s.* per Ounce.	Depreciation on 100*l.* since Date of Contract.
	£ s. d.	Gs.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1797	3 17 10½	100	125 7 10	119 8 4¾
1798 }	3 18 0	99 $\frac{832}{1000}$	125 3 10	119 4 7¼
1799 }				
1800 }				
1801				
1802				
1803 }	4 0 0	97 $\frac{343}{1000}$	122 1 3	116 5 0
1804				
1805				
1806 }				
1807	4 2 0	94 $\frac{918}{1000}$	119 1 8	113 10 8¾
1808	4 4 0	92 $\frac{737}{1000}$	116 5 0	110 14 3½
1809	4 8 0	88 $\frac{494}{1000}$	110 19 3¾	105 12 6
1810	4 11 0	85 $\frac{270}{1000}$	107 6 2½	102 3 11½
1811	4 13 0	83 $\frac{736}{1000}$	105 0 0	100 0 0

The report of the House of Commons states that the price of Gold Bullion, which, by the regulation of the Mint, is 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.* per oz., was, during 1806, 1807, and 1808, as high as 4*l.* per oz. I have given the advantage to contracts, taking it higher.

Since the restriction on cash payments in 1797, the natural check and safeguard against excessive issues of paper currency has been removed; and it is confessed, that the Bank has not been guided in regulating the amount of their notes either by the price of gold bullion, or by the state of the foreign exchanges. All paper, not convertible into gold on demand, is in its nature liable to depreciation from excess, and the amount of such depreciation is measured by the excess of the market price of bullion above the Mint price. When the paper currency is not able to purchase as much gold *as it promises to pay*, then in proportion to that smaller quantity which it can command at any given time is the depreciation of the paper. Since 1799 gold bullion has progressively advanced in price, in proportion as the real value of the note (by which the gold has been purchased) has declined.

The alteration of the intrinsic value of the currency has been so considerable, that it is become necessary, for the just and equitable liquidation of contracts made prior to the depreciation of the currency, or at any time during the progress of that depreciation, to ascertain the real intrinsic value of the common currency in which all contracts have been estimated, at the date of each respective agreement. For this purpose, it must be ascertained what quantity of standard gold any given sum of the common currency was able to command at the date of the agreement; and the payment of the same quantity of gold, or the value of that quantity, will be the equitable fulfilment of the contract, according to the intent and meaning of the parties. A payment in paper money of inferior value is a payment in name only and not in reality; a payment in good and lawful money, according to the letter, may be a payment of more than was intended by the spirit of the contract.

It has been said, that no contracts since 1797 could have been expected to be paid in gold. If such contracts stipulate for payment in gold, they are nevertheless binding on the parties, and any modification must be considered as an act of favour and concession. Such contracts ought, on every principle of justice, to be fulfilled according to their spirit and meaning. The Restriction Act at first was expressly stated to be only temporary; and for ten years there was no important depreciation: it was not before 1808 that any serious injury was sustained. The hope that the currency would be restored to its former value, might have induced many persons to submit to a loss of five or six per cent.; but are there no limits to the endurance of an injury, and is the patient acquiescence for so long a time to be now urged as a conclusive reason against all future attempts to resist a manifest fraud and public injustice?

It appears, from the First Table, that any considerable increase of the amount of notes in circulation has an obvious influence in producing an advance of the price of gold, and a correspondent diminution of the real value of the pound note. The average price of wheat for England and Wales, which from 1771 to 1785 was 46*s.* the quarter, and from 1786 to 1797 was 52*s.*, has since that period, in the short space of fourteen years, experienced an advance in price greatly exceeding the advance of the whole preceding century. Before the bank restriction, and even during the two first years, it required eighteen quarters of wheat to purchase one pound weight of standard gold, which was coined into 44 guineas and a half; at subsequent periods it has required only fourteen quarters and half a bushel, twelve quarters and two bushels, to purchase a pound weight of gold, even at the apparent high price of gold. These calculations are made on the average prices both of corn and gold

for five years, omitting the two years of dearth, 1800 and 1801. In the last year, 1810, the average price of wheat was 106*s.* 2*d.* the quarter, and the price of gold for that year was 4*l.* 11*s.* the ounce: it required then only ten quarters two bushels and one peck to purchase a pound of gold; which same quantity of gold fourteen years before required no less than eighteen quarters of wheat to purchase it. Considering the facts here stated, it is impossible to maintain that the price of gold has increased of late years; on the contrary, there is every reason to believe that a real and sensible diminution in the value of the precious metals has taken place, comparing them with wheat and labour, usually considered as the best criterions and standards of value.

The pound troy is, by the regulation of the Mint, coined into 44½ guineas of the weight of 5 dwts. $9\frac{3}{89}$ grs.; but guineas, if not reduced below the weight of 5 dwts. 8 grs., continue to be a legal tender. At that weight, viz. 128 grains, the pound troy of 5760 grains is equal in weight to 45 instead of 44½ guineas. Promissory notes and tokens of the Bank of England, to the amount of 46*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.*, can virtually and lawfully be discharged only by the payment by that corporation of 44½ guineas, or gold coins to that amount; and as 44½ guineas is only another name for a troy pound weight of standard gold, every 46*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.* worth of bank notes is an engagement to pay a troy pound-weight of standard gold.* A bank note, or any paper currency, neither has, nor can have, any value but what it derives from being a true representative, not merely of the coins of the realm, but of a *certain quantity of gold*; because the coins of the realm have themselves, and can have, no value but what they

* From the "Theory of Money," printed for S. Highley, 24, Fleet Street, 1811; a work containing a variety of useful information upon this subject.

derive from the quantity of sterling gold contained in them; and the gold coins in use are legal tender so long only as they contain the quantity of gold declared by the King's proclamation to be contained in them.

In the Earl of Liverpool's Treatise on the Coins, an account is given of the different *treasons* against the pound sterling which have been committed at different times, a brief summary of which may be usefully inserted.

				s.	d.
1	In the 28th year of his reign	Edw. I.	coined 1lb. weight of silver into	20	3
2	18th	Edw. III.	„	22	2
3	20th	Edw. III.	„	22	6
4	27th	Edw. III.	„	25	0
5	13th	Hen. IV.	„	30	0
6	4th	Edw. IV.	„	37	6
7	18th	Hen. VIII.	„	45	0
8	In the 2nd year of her reign	Elizabeth	„	60	0
9	43rd	Elizabeth	„	62	0

The reformation of the coin (in those times the only circulating medium) seems to have formed no inconsiderable part of the grievances for which parliaments attempted to obtain redress from those sovereigns, who, urged by their necessities, had degraded the coin for the purpose of defrauding their subjects.

Since the establishment of a more regular government, acting by general rules in the administration of the national affairs, according to the well-understood interests both of the government and people, no sovereign of England, since the reign of Elizabeth, has had recourse to the expedient of making further innovation in the standard of the currency. The legal standard has remained unaltered ever since the time when Queen Elizabeth made the last alteration in the silver coinage, and gold has since been made the only legal tender in all payments above 25*l.* in value.

The use of the Second Table is to show, by inspec-

tion, the real quantity of gold which the current paper money was able to purchase in any given year; that quantity, or the weight of the number of guineas in the third column, being, according to the spirit of the contract, the equitable payment of 105*l.*; the fourth column shows the value of the weight of gold equal to the number of guineas contained in the third column, at the price of 4*l.* 14*s.* per ounce; the fifth and last column shows the further depreciation of paper money for every hundred pound since the date of the contract.

It would have been a much easier and shorter method to have paid the difference of the value of bank notes by an addition to the nominal sum equivalent to the depreciation; but this practice would have exposed the fact to daily view, and would have carried with it irresistible conviction; and the legislature has lately interfered to prevent the depreciation from becoming thus palpable and manifest.

If gold is in demand for the payment of contracts, for instance, for the discharge of rent, it will now be necessary for the tenant to require two prices for his produce, one for gold and another for paper; or he may, if more convenient, dispose of the whole of his produce for the ordinary paper currency, and purchase the weight of standard gold (if gold coin cannot easily be procured) requisite to discharge his rent or bond debts, according to the spirit of his contracts.

It has sometimes been said that the total disappearance of gold, and universal substitution of paper, in all payments, prove that it is impossible to procure gold: but it must be recollected that the whole question rests precisely on the inferior value of our paper money compared with gold; and therefore, as long as any considerable difference exists in reality, it is a manifest absurdity to imagine that payments will be made indifferently in gold and paper, when one

currency has been 10, 15, and even 20 per cent. less in value than the gold coin. Let the value of the paper currency be restored to the value of the legal gold coins, and payments will again be made in gold and paper indifferently: let the opposite course be persevered in, and allow the depreciation to become so sensible that gold shall be demanded generally, in preference to paper money, in satisfaction of old contracts, and in this manner the demand for gold will establish two prices, — one for commodities sold for paper, and another for those sold for the gold coins.

ON THE THIRD READING OF THE GOLD COIN AND BANK NOTE BILL.

(July 8. 1811.)

Lord King expressed his astonishment that no noble lord on the other side should have risen to attempt to justify or explain the clauses which had from that side of the house been introduced into the bill, and which so peculiarly called for explanation from those who proposed or supported them. Under these circumstances, he felt it is duty to make a few observations upon the Bill as it now stood, and which he considered as wholly nugatory with respect to the object it professed to have in view, whilst at the same time it threw still greater difficulties in the way of the adjustment of contracts between landlord and tenant. There must now be two operations instead of one. As the law stood, the tenant might satisfy the contract by paying the bank note at its real value. That being rendered impossible by this bill, the tenant must take a certain

portion of his produce to market, and sell it at a lower rate, for the purpose of procuring gold to satisfy his landlord. If those who now urged forward this bill thought they could thereby retard the depreciation of bank-notes, or prevent there being two prices, one in paper and the other in gold, they were miserably mistaken. Already there were in fact two prices, a gold and a paper price, and to that the system must come. He had listened with much attention to the arguments of Ministers upon this subject, and they really amounted to nothing more than this:—"The Bank of England have issued a piece of paper which they call a one pound note. We (the Treasury) agree to take it as a one pound note, therefore it is a one pound note, and equal to a pound sterling." Was it to be believed that this could keep up bank notes at a nominal value, depreciated as they undoubtedly were, compared with the price of gold. The noble Secretary of State had said, on a former day, that the bill was necessary for the protection of the tenantry, —an observation which convinced him (Lord King) of the ignorance of the noble lord upon the subject. How could the interests of the tenantry be protected, if protection was not given generally to the agricultural interests of the country? and how were the agricultural interests of the country to be protected, when, by this bill, additional difficulties were thrown in the way of the adjustment of contracts between landlord and tenant, and those contracts were interfered with in a way most injurious to the interests of both? The only consequence must be, that landlords would refuse to grant leases to their tenants, for the performance of the conditions of which they could have no security. Their Lordships were, in short, utterly wasting their time in the consideration of this bill. It could by no possi-

bility do good, nor could it achieve the object which it professed to have in view. They must either repeal the Bank-restriction, or they must have two prices, a gold and a paper price. This it would be impossible by the bill, or any such measure, to prevent. An instance had been stated relative to this subject, in which a person went to purchase 3 per Cent. Consols. He was told that they were at 64 or 65: his answer was, that he came with 1,000 guineas in his pocket. That immediately altered the case; and he was told that he might buy with gold at a much lower price. This must necessarily be the case with respect to every commodity, unless they returned to payments in specie. It was in vain for their Lordships to pass this Bill; it could not effect the object those who had adopted it professed to have in view, it could not retard the depreciation of bank-notes, nor could it prevent the two prices in gold and paper — the natural effect of that depreciation.

An amendment was negatived on the question for the third reading.

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GOLD COIN AND BANK NOTE AMENDMENT BILL.

(April 28. 1812.)

Lord King observed that the noble Earl (Bathurst) had entered into a variety of minute statements, but had carefully kept out of sight the real object of the bill, which was to make bank notes a legal tender. By the measure of last session bank notes were made a legal tender out of Court, and now they came to be made a legal tender in Court. Thus, whatever title they might choose to give the bill, it was neither more nor less than to make bank notes a legal tender. His Lordship then adverted to some of the arguments used by Earl Bathurst, and observed that it was fallacious to state that an increased issue of bank notes was in consequence of an increased trade and revenue. The revenue was, in 1810, 65,000,000*l.*, and the issue of bank notes 22,500,000*l.*; whilst, in 1811, the revenue decreased to 62,600,000*l.*, and the issue of bank notes increased to 23,400,000*l.* The depreciation of the paper currency was, in fact, acknowledged by ministers themselves in their conduct, though not in words. What was the reason for passing the bill, which had been read that day a third time, for increasing the annuity of the princesses from 30,000*l.* to 36,000*l.*, but because 36,000*l.* now was only equal to 30,000*l.* ten years ago? The same argument applied to bills which were continually coming before them, for increasing allowances of different descriptions. Was it not, therefore, manifestly unjust to pass such a bill as the present, to compel persons to receive payments at a depreciated rate? His Lordship alluded to the action he had brought against a Bank-Director for

50*l.* for rent, for the purpose of trying the question, and read a notice which had been served by his agent upon the officer of the Court, cautioning him against taking bank notes in any payment into Court; that being the question at issue, whether he (Lord King) was to be compelled to receive bank notes, or could insist upon good and lawful money. The officer of the Court did, however, notwithstanding this notice, receive the payment in bank notes; and his Lordship contended that this was a power of dispensing with the law which no officer of a Court had a right to assume. His Lordship maintained that this bill would be characterized by posterity as a most iniquitous law, and must lead to the most ruinous consequences. They were called upon to make a legal tender of the notes of the Bank of England without any securities against an excessive issue and a consequent excessive depreciation. If the present measure was to be persevered in, his Lordship contended that the practice of granting leases must cease. It was impossible to say how much in the course of six or seven years bank paper might be depreciated.

He appealed to the noble Earl with whom the present measure originated, who, he knew, felt for the labouring classes of the community, to reflect how cruelly this measure must militate against them: to noble Lords on the other side it would be useless to appeal; they had already shown, on the occasion of the Frame-Breakers' Bill, that they were insensible to the sufferings of the labouring poor. To the noble Earl, however, he thought he might appeal with safety on this head; and he asked him, did he not admit that, if we had a metallic circulating medium in this country, instead of a paper currency alone, the price of corn would at this moment have been less, than it now was, by at least one-fifth?

PEACE ESTABLISHMENT.

(February 14. 1816.)

Lord King considered the present attempt of his Majesty's ministers as an experiment to try how far the country would endure an expense of this nature, —an experiment, if he might say so, how far the servility of Parliament would be carried in submitting to an establishment of such magnitude. He believed it to be neither more nor less than an attempt to place this country on a level with the great military powers of the Continent. The noble Earl opposite (Liverpool) had been asked if this was a fit reward to the country after all the exertions which it had made? To this no answer, however, had been returned by him. He had been asked in like manner, what would have been the establishment he would have thought of proposing if Buonaparte had remained on the throne of France? To this also no answer had been returned. In alluding to the establishment of 1792, it had been said by the noble Earl that regret was expressed by Mr. Pitt after his having then reduced it to such a low scale; and the noble Earl had thought proper to add, as his own opinion, that if our establishment had not been so reduced we should have been enabled to have put an end to the war in a short time. What, did the noble Earl still regret that he was disappointed in his march to Paris? Did he really think that any military force which could possibly have been kept up in this country would have enabled us to carry on a war on the Continent at that time with any effect, in the beginning of the revolutionary war? The noble Earl had said,

that as the pay and allowances of our forces had increased, the expense of our establishments must also necessarily be augmented. But was this a fair way of stating the case? Was it not contended on this side of the house, and would it not be admitted by the noble Earl, that the increased expense of our establishments arose not so much from an increase in the rate of that expense as from the number of men? The expense was four or five times greater than before, and we had three times the number of men. The whole drift of the argument drawn by the noble earl for an increase of our forces in the colonies from the increase of the whole number of men in all the colonies was, that it furnished his Majesty's ministers with an argument for the necessity of maintaining an equally large number of troops at home. Those persons who recommended the keeping up of a large military force in this country showed themselves ignorant of the true nature and resources of this country. This country had made such efforts as had never been heard of; but in proportion as great efforts were made during war, we ought in the same proportion to sink into a state of calm at the termination of that war, in order that we might be able to recommence the same efforts on the breaking out of a new war. Did not every body see that the powers of the Continent, who were always at the full stretch with their exertions, were not able to make such efforts as this country in cases of emergency? This was the peculiar advantage of our situation; and those who recommended that we should equal the continental powers in our establishments would have us cast away that peculiar advantage, and prevent us from making in future those exertions which we had hitherto made to the astonishment of the world.

AUSTRIAN LOAN—PECUNIARY SACRIFICES.

(March 1. 1816.)

Lord King rose, pursuant to notice, to call the attention of the House to the pecuniary sacrifices which had been made by this country in its treaties and transactions with continental powers. It was his intention to submit two motions to their consideration with reference to this subject. The first was, for a communication to the House of what measures had been taken by ministers to recover all or any part of the sums due on account of the loan made to Austria in 1796; and the other was for an account of the steps which had been taken to recover from Russia the sums paid for interest in respect of the loan obtained by Russia in Holland, and to procure a discharge to this country from its engagements on account of that loan. It was necessary, for the right understanding of these treaties, to look at the accounts connected with them, in order to see the amount of pecuniary sacrifice which this country had made. In these treaties he believed there were no less than twenty-five subsidies, exclusive of the subsidies to the great powers. The omissions in the treaties in this respect were not less extraordinary than the matter contained in them. No attempt whatever appeared to have been made, in the course of the negociations, to claim for this country the just debts and large balance due to her on account of loans made to foreign powers.

In order to bring into one view the amount of sacrifices on the part of this country, the particulars might be classed under the following heads: 1st, the

Austrian loan of 1796; 2d, balance due from France on account of prisoners of war; 3d, the Russian loan in Holland; 4th, the advances of 600,000*l.*, and afterwards of 300,000*l.*, to Portugal. As to the Austrian loan, their Lordships, or some of them at least, would remember the circumstances under which it was contracted, and the statements made to Parliament at that period. Great stress was then laid on the good faith of the Austrian government, and the confidence that might be reposed in it for repayment. Securities were formally taken, and we were to have the right of sueing the emperor on these securities in his own courts. This was surely a matter of too much importance to have escaped the attention of the negociators on the part of this country; and he hoped some representations had been made on this subject. But it was with a view to have that matter brought regularly before their Lordships by an official return that he now proposed to move for these papers. The sum was too large to have escaped attention; and some representations must have been made, or some satisfactory reason ought to be given, for the omission to make the demand. If their Lordships would look at the original amount of the loan, which was seven millions, 3 per Cents., together with the interest which had accrued upon it, they would find that about fourteen millions were due to this country on that account. Austria certainly had not been slow in enforcing her own demands, or in raising contributions, where she had no such just right, as we had against her. She had raised contributions in Naples, where she had no claim, or at least none so strong and clear as the right of this country for repayment of the loan in question. What had been the conduct of the other powers on the Continent? All of them had put forward their claims. The claims between Austria and Russia, in respect of their shares of

Poland, had been adjusted with the utmost nicety; and in the treaty between Russia and Prussia there were no less than five or six articles of this description. The attention of those who negociated on behalf of this country must have been called in a particular manner to this part of their duty. Then, one million having been paid, there remained about thirteen millions due on account of this loan; and this, added to the advances on account of the Russian loan, and our liberality with respect to it, our advances of 900,000*l.* to Portugal, and the balance due from France on account of prisoners of war, made a total of about twenty-eight millions due to this country — a pecuniary loss equal to the whole amount of the contributions imposed on France as an indemnity for the ravages which that country had committed during a war of twenty-five years' continuance. It might be said, perhaps, that the length of time since these debts had been contracted was a reason for not insisting upon payment. But why was not length of time allowed in our favour? This country was still liable on account of the Russian loan in Holland of 1782; and if so, why not pay some attention to our claims upon other powers? There might, perhaps, have been good reason for not insisting upon this demand against Austria at the time of the treaties of Campo Formio, Luneville, and Vienna, after the defeats which had led to these treaties. But why had not the claim been made during the late negociations? It appeared to be the effect of the new doctrine of disinterestedness on the part of this country which had led our minister at Congress to neglect the interests of the nation, and then to make a boast of it. This was of the same nature with other blunders in these treaties. He alluded more particularly to that of expensive and disinterested generosity by which we had agreed to

leave the northern fortresses in the hands of France, because we could erect others for the defence of Europe. In truth, we had better almost have had no minister at all at Congress, since our just demands had been thus neglected by a minister who attempted to convert his blunders into proofs of liberality and disinterested generosity on the part of this country. It was proper that their Lordships should have on their table an official return with reference to this subject, that the fact of negligence might be regularly before them; and with that view he should move, first, for copies of instructions sent to, and of representations made by, our ministers at Vienna, Paris, or elsewhere, for the recovery, or in the way of claim, of debts due by Austria and other powers to this country.

Motion negatived without a division.

HABEAS CORPUS SUSPENSION BILL.

(June 16. 1817.)

Lord King said that the evils of the year 1780 were owing to want of vigilance; and the security against their recurrence was vigilance, and not the suspension of our laws and liberties. If tenfold the danger existed, there would be neither necessity nor reason for suspending the great safeguard of the constitution. The report stated that the magistrates had displayed great intelligence and activity; that the yeomanry had been called out, and exhibited great energy and intrepidity; that on the part of the former there was the greatest vigilance, and on that of the latter the most prompt obedience, and that by

their united efforts they had overcome any resistance that had been offered. Why then should further powers be granted when the ordinary administration of the laws by the existing authorities had been so effective? The report further stated, in very vague terms, that arms had been prepared; but it did not authorise a belief that these preparations were to any considerable extent. One part of this report was more vague and indefinite than the rest: it spoke of the existence of traces of an intention to issue proclamations to free the subjects of the kingdom from their allegiance, but it added that no preparations were made for the purpose, and that no draft of such documents were found. Thus proclamations which were not drawn up, but existed in conjecture, were made a characteristic prelude to a plot that was never formed! By examining the report, and looking at the state of the country, it would be found that the disturbances, which were magnified into systematic rebellion, were confined to those manufacturing districts where the want of employment, and the consequent pressure of distress, had produced the greatest degree of irritation, and exposed the minds of the ignorant to machinations of the designing.

But who were these wicked and designing persons who took advantage of the public calamities to graft upon them disaffection? The report itself answered this question. It allowed that spies and informers increased the irritation and encouraged the desperate projects which they were employed to detect and to counteract. Let it be considered, however, to what conclusion this would lead, if distress that was liable to be excited to disaffection were always to be an excuse or a reason for suspending our liberties. On this principle the suspending of the constitution might be indefinite. On former occasions this great bulwark of our freedom was not suspended except in

cases of threatened invasion or existing internal insurrection, where men of rank and power were arrayed against the government. Now, however, there was no disputed succession, no threatened rebellion; and the greatest evil to be dreaded was, that violence on the part of the government might lead to disaffection among the people, and that disaffection produced by tyrannical measures might produce that state of things which they were intended to repress. It was foolish to say that such a measure as that before the House was rendered necessary by the existence of plots to overthrow the state. There was no systematic conspiracy or plot; there were no leaders, no means, no arrangements. The plot, if it existed, comprehended all the distressed, all the destitute, all without employment, or the means of subsistence; and for the discontents of such persons a habeas corpus suspension was not a proper remedy. If people of great rank, wealth, or consequence were employed in directing to the overthrow of the government the irritation arising from distress, he would not say but that a measure like the present might be necessary: but this plot, as it was called, was a plot of people without property against those who had property; and to plots of this nature relief and kind treatment was the most efficacious remedy. To create alarms on purpose to ground on them an abridgment of the people's rights, was always the resource of a weak and unsteady government. This experiment on the present occasion he feared had been too successful.

ON THE BANK RESTRICTION.

(February 3. 1818.)

Lord King said he felt himself called upon to advert to the subject of the Bank; in consequence of having heard, with the greatest regret, from official authority in another place, that doubts existed whether payments in cash could be resumed at the Bank at the period pointed out for that purpose. The reason assigned for this apprehended delay was so extraordinary in itself, and so unintelligible to the country, it being impossible to conceive how in reality the negociation of foreign loans could tend to prevent the resumption of cash payments by the Bank of England, that it could only be considered as the ostensible reason, and not the real one. He could not but consider this postponement as a measure the most detrimental to the interests of the country. Without a metallic currency there could be no certainty, no stability in any contracts or dealings, and speculation was let loose upon the country in all its most injurious forms. What would be said if the minister of France were to tell the legislative body of that country that the Bank of France could not pay in cash, because there was a loan negociating there for England or any other country? Would not such an assertion be laughed at as a mere subterfuge? and was it to be expected that such an assertion here would not be considered in precisely a similar light? If, indeed, the negociating of loans here for foreign countries was to be a cause of preventing the Bank of England from paying in cash, then he could conceive no time in which that return to a healthy cir-

culation could take place. This was most alarming to the country; nor could he conceive any line of conduct more calculated to produce the most serious injury. Were they to understand that the government was unable to pay its debts to the Bank, and that thus the latter were unable to pay in specie? He deprecated such a system as the most impolitic that could possibly be acted upon, convinced, as he was, that there could be no security whatever but in the return to the sound and healthy circulation of a metallic currency.

Lord King, in explanation, said, that he did not impute the continuance of the restriction to any improper understanding between the Government and the Bank. He merely meant, that if the Bank were limited in their issues of paper, they could not afford such extensive accommodation to the Government as they are at present enabled to do in the taking of exchequer bills.

ON THE THIRD READING OF THE INDEMNITY BILL.

(March 5. 1818.)

Lord King thought it necessary to say a few words on the motion made by his noble friend for recommitting the Bill. In the shape in which the measure came before their Lordships, it obviously extended the protection of indemnity too far, and much farther than any of the grounds, on which the Bill was pretended to be introduced, warranted. In fact, it was proposed to extend indemnity as fully to him who did not deserve it as to him who did. It not only indemnified the magistrate who had acted in good

faith under the Suspension Act, but the spy who had provoked disorders which afforded the pretext for that law. That this protection of informers had been in view from beginning to end was evident from the manner in which the clause proposed for excepting those persons from the operation of the Bill had been opposed and rejected. It appeared clear that it had, from the first, never been intended to confine the Bill to ministers and magistrates, but to make it give a sweeping protection to the lowest agents. With respect to the preliminary measure, the report of the Committee which preceded the Bill, it was notorious that the evidence on which that report was founded was altogether *ex parte*, for their Lordships had refused to refer to the Committee any of the numerous petitions presented from persons who stated themselves to have been aggrieved or seriously injured by the suspension of the Habeas-Corpus. It was undeniable that many persons had had to endure solitary confinement for a great length of time. Why did not the Committee inquire into their cases? The report of a former committee admitted that the spies employed to discover treasonable designs had instigated to acts which they were employed only to detect. Did not this warrant the suspicion that many of the persons who complained of the operation of the Habeas-Corpus Suspension had suffered innocently? The last report laid before their Lordships stated, that up to a certain period it had been intended to bring the persons in custody to trial. He should be glad to be informed when this intention had been abandoned. He believed the true reason of refraining from trying the persons ministers had imprisoned was, that they had no evidence against them, except what they had procured from their spies and informers. But after the result of the proceedings on a charge of treason in Westminster Hall, where almost the whole case rested on

the evidence of an informer, he did not think it probable that any trial on such evidence could have been again contemplated. The period at which the intention of trying the persons detained had been abandoned was, therefore, in all probability, not very recent. When the Bill was in the Committee, their Lordships had been told that it was necessary to protect persons who gave information of illegal designs. Here he could not help asking himself whether he was living in a country governed by law. Was it possible to conceive that in England it was now become dangerous for a man to do his duty to the public? Was it meant to be said, that if a man performed his duty by giving evidence tending to the punishment of crimes, he was liable to assassination? To this extent the supposition on which the protection was called for went; but he never could be brought to think so ill of the people of England, as to believe there could be any ground for such a calumny. In what part of the world were witnesses so secure as in this country? Their security rested on a solid foundation — on the publicity of all legal proceedings — on the excellent practice of confronting the accuser and the accused. Witnesses were safe, because there were no secret tribunals to excite the jealousy and indignation of the people. The way to bring witnesses into danger was the very practice which had been resorted to — the throwing of a veil over their evidence — the taking of informations without confronting the accuser with the accused. This was precisely the principle on which the Inquisition acted. The holy office could, like his Majesty's ministers, assign very plausible reasons for not making public the evidence on which its victims were consigned to dungeons and torments. This principle was the most dangerous ever introduced into this country; and, if allowed to take root, would destroy every vestige of liberty. If

bills of indemnity of this sort were to become the consequence of the suspension of the Habeas-Corpus Act, a most fatal encouragement to the abuse of power would be afforded. If all the base agents which had been employed during the late unfortunate period, all the infamous spies were to have protection and reward, hosts of those iniquitous beings would be created. The country would soon abound with such wretches as that Judkin Fitzgerald, of whom their Lordships had heard so much. When ministers were asking for the power which was put into their hands, they called upon Parliament to give it them upon their responsibility; but after obtaining that power and exercising it, they shrunk from their boasted responsibility by refusing all inquiry. But this was not all; they would, by the passing of this Bill, establish a most dangerous precedent, and the Act of 1818 would be quoted in support of future encroachments on the law and constitution; for it was impossible that any indemnity of a more extensive and sweeping nature could ever be proposed. The public had been disgusted within these few days with reports of persons, employed by the police, exciting individuals to commit crimes, in order that they might obtain the blood-money consequent upon the disclosure of those offences which they had themselves excited; and what was the difference between the practices of persons of this description exciting others to the commission of offences for the sake of obtaining a reward, and the practices of individuals, employed by the Government, who excited to acts of treason in order that they too might obtain their reward? When Brock, Pelham, and Vaughan, and wretches of that description, obtained a pardon, was it not to be apprehended that crimes would continue to be excited for the sake of the rewards which their prosecution produced? and if informers, such as

Oliver and his associates, were to obtain impunity, would it not be a consequence that treason would again be excited, and that discontent would be increased? To sanction the impunity of informers under such circumstances would be a violation of all the principles of justice. For such a stretch of legislation no ground had been laid, no plea that was entitled to attention. The system of employing spies was that which led to all the mischief on which this Bill of Indemnity was grounded; it was that system which promoted the proceedings that were made a pretext for suspending the Habeas-Corpus. But the indemnifying such men must strike at all confidence in public justice; a confidence which greatly, if not mainly, contributed to the support of it. The suspension was had recourse to last year in a period of profound peace; and there was as much reason for its adoption four years ago, when the Luddites were creating disturbances, as last year. The only difference between the two periods was, that it was asserted last year that the disaffected were connected with clubs in the metropolis; but this rested only on the evidence of Oliver, and if his evidence were taken away, there was nothing else to support the allegation. If, then, these spies had promoted the measures that led to the suspension, and if they were afterwards the only evidence on which that suspension was so unnecessarily continued, it became the House at least to except them from the operation of the present Bill. He doubted not his Majesty's ministers might be able to bear an inquiry; but unless these informers were excepted from the operation of the Bill, it looked as if they shrunk from all inquiry; he should therefore oppose the Bill, unless the indemnification were confined to magistrates, and spies were altogether excluded from its operation. Were they to indemnify informers for injuring the characters of individuals

against whom they might have malice, without any evidence to show that their conduct deserved it? To resort to such measures was to give a full scope to the malignancy of individuals who might choose to excite discontents in order to profit by them, or who might choose, by fabricated tales, to impose upon the government. As to the danger to persons giving information, arising from the disclosure of their names, it could only mean assassination; and it was too much to say, in a country like this, governed by laws, and with the known disposition of the people, that any such danger could actually exist.

ON THE RESUMPTION OF CASH PAYMENTS. — BANK OF ENGLAND.

(May 21. 1819.)

Lord King said, that after the very able exposition which they had heard from the noble Earl, it was hardly necessary to say any thing in favour of the original resolutions, of which he heartily approved. When he heard, from a certain class of persons who had petitioned their Lordships, those resolutions objected to, as tending to a forced and precipitate reduction of the circulating medium, he could not help considering their objections as proceeding from a wish to prolong, to the utmost time in their power, the duration of the restriction; for, if the country was *ever* to return to payments in specie, he would defy any man to devise a plan more easy, more moderate, or less tending to produce distress, than that contained in the resolutions before the House. The restriction had certainly enabled the Bank to

accommodate some classes of the mercantile world; and by producing, through the means of the increase of the quantity of the currency, a rise of prices, had changed the distribution of wealth, and the employment of capital. By putting an end to the restriction, an alteration in the employment of capital, and the distribution of wealth, must be produced in an opposite direction to that which the depreciation of the currency had produced. That this should take place as gradually as possible was certainly desirable, though some distress must, at all events, be produced. When we talked of putting an end to facilities which the restriction afforded, it was to be remembered that those were facilities afforded to some classes at the expense of others: they were afforded to the merchants who were able to procure discounts at the Bank, at the expense of those who could not obtain them, and at the expense of all fixed annuitants, and all creditors on money contracts, by the depreciation of the currency consequent on the increased issues. This process was no addition to, but a diversion of the wealth of the country; it was robbing one class to afford undue advantage to another. The wealth was taken in part, it was true, from those who did not actively employ it, and given to those who did; but whatever increase to the general riches was thus effected was at the expense of injustice to those classes whom it was the duty of the legislature to protect. Those accommodations, too, at this moment, tended to aggravate an evil under which the commercial world were labouring — the system of overtrading, of increasing shipments to an extravagant amount in one year, while, in the next, a proportionate diminution of demand below the average, and a proportionate languor ensued. Under those circumstances, the Committee had inquired what was the course to be pursued. On the one hand, if the

attempt had been made to cause a speedy resumption of payments in specie, much misery must have ensued: on the other hand, if they had only done what had been so often done before, if they had only fixed a period at which the Bank should resume payments, without taking measures to compel it to make preparations for doing so, those persons must have been exceedingly credulous indeed, who, after the repeated failures of former acts, could have expected any thing but failure again. The Bank had never made the proper preparations at the proper time; they had never so reduced their issues as to bring down gold to the Mint price. They would have followed the same course; they would have again come to Parliament with a special case, and again obtained a farther time, as they had before. The Committee had, on consideration of their circumstances, decided on such a plan as, on the one hand, extended the period at which the resumption of cash payments was to take place, so far as to diminish the chances of distress; and, on the other hand, afforded some security that the Bank should take the proper means of preparation. The noble Earl had truly said that by fixing the time when the Bank should be obliged to give bullion at a certain price in exchange for its notes, the evil was thence arrested. Then, for the first time, the Bank would be obliged to take a metallic standard; then, for the first time, would the public have a security beyond the discretion of the Bank directors. The numerical amount of Bank notes could be no guidance for the amount of issues. The only rule which could be given for their regulation was to keep gold at the Mint price. This was the only check on the vicious practice which twenty-two years' usage had accustomed some to consider as the natural state of the currency of the country. The noble Earl (Lauderdale) who had just sat down

had taken a view of the subject peculiar to himself, and had contended that no depreciation existed in the currency, but that the price of gold and the state of the exchanges were to be attributed entirely to the Mint regulations. It appeared to him (Lord King) that those regulations had not that effect. If the two metals were allowed to circulate in the country, one of these two arrangements was of necessity to be adopted. Silver should be made the standard, and gold should pass at an *agio;* or while gold remained the standard, such a seignorage should be taken on the silver coin (which circulated for convenience' sake) as would secure it against destruction on the accidental variations of the relative value of the two metals. The deduction of 6½ per cent. as a seignorage on the silver coin seemed to him a judicious measure to prevent the trouble of an *agio.* But because the silver coin, on which a seignorage was taken, and which was not the standard, remained in circulation, no inference was to be formed that the currency was not depreciated. If, indeed, paper had been issued to such an amount as to depreciate the currency more than 6½ per cent., the silver coin also would not have tolerated the destruction of a coinage which had cost half a million,—had cautiously kept its issues within bounds, no doubt with that object in view. A question of his to one of the witnesses had produced an answer which confirmed this idea. He regretted, as this had been the effect of the silver coinage, that it had not been issued half a dozen years before the peace, as the means resorted to by the Bank to prevent it from being melted would have prevented the depreciation of the currency to the amount of 25 per cent., and all the consequent misery. The noble Earl who had just sat down had shown that a considerable importation of silver had taken place, which, according to the noble Earl, was

not possible when the exchanges were really against us. But it was manifest that the noble Earl's inference was not correct. In the time of Bonaparte, gold was imported at a time when the whole currency was confessedly depreciated; it was imported because there was a demand for it to be re-exported to France to pay for corn, when that country would not receive our manufactures. The noble Baron concluded by giving a cordial support to the resolutions.

ADDRESS ON THE PRINCE REGENT'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION.

(November 23. 1819.)

Lord King observed, that the assertion of the noble Secretary of State (Sidmouth), that mis-statements had gone abroad on the subject of the Manchester transactions, laid the strongest ground for inquiry. The speech of the noble Secretary was remarkable for its coincidence with every thing that Government had done regarding the melancholy transactions of the 16th of August. It contained not one expression of regret. The letter of thanks to the magistrates, the answer to the city address, the speech from the throne, and the address now proposed in answer to it, were all silent on this head. The magistrates had been approved of in a high quarter, but it was certain they were not approved of by the nation. It must be allowed on all hands that they had committed indiscretions; at least, they had been guilty of rashness and precipitation. Magistrates might act lawfully, and yet be guilty of indiscretion. They had a title to apprehend the individuals upon proper depositions,

but they might have been indiscreet in selecting the moment for their apprehension. Why did they not issue their warrants before the meeting? Why did they not prevent the meeting by declaring it illegal, or why not wait till it had dispersed, to apprehend its leaders? The dangers, if there were any, arose from its dispersion, and not from listening to speeches; and there was every reason to believe that, if not interfered with, it would have passed off like innumerable other meetings of the same kind. The noble Lord then went on to state, that distress was the cause of the present discontent, and appealed to those places where disaffection appeared exactly proportioned to the privations endured. He then adverted to the meetings for loyal declarations, and said that such effusions always preceded attacks on the liberty of the subject. He did not deny that there was now considerable danger, and considerable discontent; but contended that the former could only be averted, and the latter removed by measures of conciliation and kindly reform. Regarding reform, the nation was divided into three parts: the adherents of ministers, who objected to all reform; the radical reformers, whose plans would be a subversion of the constitution; and those who supported the necessity of a gradual, practical, and a moderate reform. The noble Lord professed himself desirous of being ranked in the latter class, and thought great good would result from a correction of abuses, when they should be proved to exist, and a careful repair of the breaches which time might have made in the constitution. An opinion had unfortunately gone abroad, from the neglect of this species of reform, that Parliament, instead of being a check and a control on the measures of the executive, had become its minion and its tool. It had last year increased the taxes by three millions, without any ostensible object but to benefit the fund-

holder; and the grant of 10,000*l.* a year to the Duke of York, for visiting at stated intervals his afflicted father (a measure which gave more disgust than any thing that had been done for a long time), was quoted as another instance of disregard to national interests. The noble Lord then drew a parallel between the treatment of Ireland before the late rebellion, and that of England recently, and showed how the system of spies and informers had been transplanted from one country into the other. Nothing could more tend to alienate the people from the government than a refusal for inquiry. The noble Lord, therefore, after a few more observations, concluded by supporting the amendment.

SEDITIOUS MEETINGS PREVENTION BILL.

(December 17. 1819.)

Lord King said, that every thing he had heard from the noble Viscount (Sidmouth) tended to confirm his objections to the Bill. He objected to it as part of a system of coercion of the very worst nature, the effect of which was to alter the constitution of the country, without even the formality of an examination. After the speech from the throne at the commencement of the session, in which Parliament were told that it had been necessary to make a large addition to the military force, and in which the existing distresses and discontents had been so strongly insisted on, he had expected that ministers would come down to the House in order to move for a committee to inquire into the state of the country, and the propriety of adopting the measures which they considered necessary for its pro-

tection. To his surprise, however, he found that the general practice of Parliament was in this instance to be departed from; that no committee was to be appointed; and that ministers, having committed themselves by a rash approbation of the transactions at Manchester, were resolved, upon that account, to prevent Parliament from the exercise of one of its most important and necessary functions. The fact was, that it was impossible that any examination could take place without their conduct becoming a subject of reprehension. If a disease was of such a nature to require a strong remedy, he thought it was first incumbent to examine the patient, and to see to what extent that remedy should be applied. When their Lordships were called upon to pass such bills, on the ground of the prevalence of discontent, they were bound to inquire into the cause of that discontent; they were bound to inquire whether it had its origin in the distress of the people, or whether it arose from their distrust in Parliament itself? If it arose from distrust, the passing of such measures by acclamation, and merely on the notoriety of the case, was calculated to aggravate the evil, by furnishing new proof of the subserviency of Parliament. It was possible that strong measures might be necessary, but they could not be necessary without examination, and without the accompaniment of a conciliatory spirit on the part of the Government. He was glad to find that some concessions had been made; but it was to be observed they did not originate with ministers, who so far from manifesting a disposition to conciliate the people, had taken advantage of the panic into which the country was thrown to alter the constitution. One of the greatest dangers, existing at the present day, was this disposition of the government to adopt measures of severity and coercion. The ministers had forgotten or confounded the distinction between a free and an

arbitrary government, which was, that the one rested on conviction and affection, while the other relied on the strong arm of force. If they acted on the *bonâ fide* intention of protecting the constitution, they would pass those measures as a temporary experiment, and limit their operation by the extent of the danger. In his opinion, even a stronger measure would be less objectionable if confined to a limited period. To abstain from taxation was, after all, the best mode of restoring tranquillity, and, therefore, he should vote with his noble friend (Carnarvon), for limiting to the shortest possible period the duration of an act by which the constitution was violated.

CIVIL LIST BILL.

(May 25. 1820.)

Lord King did not concur with the noble Lord (Liverpool) in the warm approbation he had bestowed on the Bill before their Lordships. In his opinion the subject of the civil list was now as embarrassed and confused as ever. This could not fail to be the case when some salaries were charged partly on the civil list and partly on the consolidated fund. He could not think that economy was intended by the authors of the present Bill. Had that been their object, they certainly never would have chosen the arrangement of 1816 as a model for the present settlement — an arrangement which had sanctioned no less than three or four privy purses, namely, the late King's, the Prince Regent's, the allowances to the Queen, &c. He did not say that these expenses were continued, but it was certain that the Bill was introduced on the

same principle of extravagant expenditure. He found that it sanctioned the abuses of the 4½ per cent. duties, and the droits of the Admiralty; and it could not, therefore, be introduced with a view to economy. The radical vice of the general government of the country was profusion; and this Bill carried that vice into the civil list. In the general government, the aim seemed to be, of every individual who directed a department, to render that department as perfect, or in other words, as expensive as possible. Thus the persons at the head of the ordnance or the navy thought only of extending their departments. What he complained of was that there was no efficient control. A certain sum should be fixed for each department, and it should be said to the heads of departments that they should be allowed no more than the estimate. The allowance should be only what could be spared, and not what the heads of departments wished for. He thought there were advantages in the old system of the civil list which the present did not possess. It was calculated to create a greater inducement to economy on the part of the Crown. In the third class he thought a more economical arrangement might be introduced. The services which came under that class were, he believed, the worst performed and the highest paid of any of the same kind for any country in Europe.

In 1816, the foreign missions had cost 300,000*l*., and 290,000*l*. was the present estimate. He could wish it to be made the interest of the Crown to employ as few foreign ministers as possible; but as the case now stood, it was only necessary for an envoy to continue long enough in the service to qualify himself for receiving a pension when he resigned and made room for another. The noble Lord had observed that any saving on this class would go to the Consolidated Fund. He believed, however, that there never would

be any saving; but the noble Lord had not told them what would have been more important, if he could have stated it, that in the case of any increase in this class, it would not be charged on the Consolidated Fund. The noble Lord had made something like a comparison between the present civil list and that of George II. Now the sum granted to his present Majesty for England was 850,000*l.*, and for Ireland 207,000*l.*, to which must be added the additional debt incurred for England, amounting to 988,000*l.*, and for Ireland 269,000*l.*, which, with what applied to Scotland, made altogether a civil list of 2,540,000*l.*; and yet the 800,000*l.* or 900,000*l.* granted to George II. was represented by the noble Lord as more liberal than this great sum. But it might be said that only a small portion of this was appropriated to the royal family. This would be easily seen by reference to the papers. The first class, which included a privy purse of 60,000*l.*, was entirely allotted to the royal family. There was, besides, the household, estimated at 290,000*l.* The payments for various purposes were stated at 41,297*l.* These and other charges amounted altogether to 900,000*l.*, for the use and dignity of the royal family alone. When, therefore, the noble Lord said that the allowance to George II. was more liberal than the present civil list, the assertion appeared to him most extraordinary, and he believed the noble Lord was the only person who could venture to make such a comparison. In Scotland a very unnecessary expense was entered into by appointments, which would not be made if the civil list were established on the principle of inducing economy. But nothing was gained even in appearance by the present system, while the subject was rendered so confused as to excite suspicion. Instead of practising economy the civil list was more expensive than ever it had been. If the noble Earl really supposed that this confused

arrangement was calculated to support the dignity of the Crown, it was plain he did not gain his object, for by reference to the accounts it was still possible to ascertain what portion of the civil list went to the royal family. He could see no sound principle in the noble Lord's argument. It might with equal propriety be contended, that the expenses of the royal family should be mixed up with those of every department of the state, for the King was the head of every branch of the executive government. The Crown surely was the head of the military establishment of the country, and yet he never heard any objection to a separate vote for the army. Upon the whole, he thought the old plan of arrangement for the civil list preferable to the present.

ON THE BILL OF PAINS AND PENALTIES AGAINST HER MAJESTY.

(August 19. 1820.)

Lord King rose in pursuance of the notice he had given on the preceding day, and said, that the counsel on both sides having yesterday closed their arguments, this, it appeared to him, was the only opportunity that remained for a member of their Lordships' House to endeavour, by some means or other, to avert those evils and difficulties, which he, in common with many of their Lordships, and with the great body of the public, felt most strongly to be intimately connected with the course they were pursuing;—evils and difficulties, the peculiar nature of which it was not necessary for him to state. Nothing which he had heard in the course of the argument

submitted to their Lordships by the learned counsel, who appeared in support of this measure, had tended in the smallest degree to shake the full conviction which he previously entertained, that bills of pains and penalties ought only to be resorted to on great public occasions, when the stability of the government was endangered, and when, from their adoption, some extraordinary benefit was likely to be derived. He would ask, as had been most properly asked by a noble Lord (Carnarvon) on the preceding day, whether any individual, either in that House or out of it, entertained a serious apprehension that mischief would ensue if this bill were not proceeded with? Not one of their Lordships had said that he entertained any degree of fear on that head; and no person whatsoever would, he believed, be found to declare that he entertained a rational fear of danger if the progress of the measure were stopped. The dread of danger to the royal succession was the only circumstance that could justify this bill; and the circumstances of the case must preclude any such apprehension.

If, then, there was no reason for introducing such a measure on that account,—if no great state necessity could be shown for bringing it forward,—they were at once reduced to the question of the expediency, the policy, the wisdom of the proceeding. The bill asserted in the preamble that great impropriety and indecency of conduct had been manifested by the Queen, and that great scandal was thereby brought on the royal family and on the country. It was highly important, he was aware, that the purity of all the members of the royal family should be preserved unsullied; and that object was stated in the preamble of the bill, in order to justify it. This alleged scandal referred to her Majesty's conduct while abroad; and he called on their Lordships, before they pro-

ceeded further, to see how the case really stood. They all knew that if her Majesty had remained abroad, no proceeding of this kind would have taken place. Then, he demanded, how was this bill necessary to vindicate the honour of the nation and of the royal family, when, if her Majesty had pleased, the government would have permitted her to remain abroad, and to have pursued those courses which were so much condemned? No stipulation was made for the individual, who was mentioned, to quit her service, — no condition of that sort was resorted to. How, then, would the honour of this nation have been vindicated if the original proposition had been agreed to, and her Majesty had been allowed by the government to continue in that situation, and amidst those scenes where, it was said, the crime imputed to her was committed? That was a most extraordinary way, indeed, to vindicate the insulted honour of the country! This reference to the honour of the nation appeared to him to be a mere pretence. It was completely false to say, the bill was necessary to vindicate the honour of the country, when ministers would themselves have allowed those licentious scenes to be continued in the country where they were said to have been carried on, without molestation; but the moment her Majesty arrived in England, where they could not be continued, then this bill was brought in. If there were any doubt as to the real object of this bill, the terms offered to her Majesty cleared away that difficulty. As long as an opportunity occurred for the continuance of the crime, ministers would allow it to continue; they would grant the means of its perpetuation, — they offered impunity to those who committed it, while the offence could be committed: but the moment it ceased, the moment it became impossible to perpetrate it, then they thought of investigation and punishment. They knew that when her Majesty came

to England it was impossible that the offence could be continued. They were aware that the person with whom the crime was said to have been committed was a foreigner, and, under the Alien Act, might be refused the privilege of remaining in England.

From all these circumstances he drew this conclusion, which appeared to be a correct one, that government would have suffered the crime to be continued with impunity, while it was possible to carry it into practice; but the moment it ceased, then they deemed it necessary to resort to punishment. It was said that her Majesty's conduct was marked by gross indecency, which tended to scandalize the country, and that therefore she was not worthy of the situation of Queen of these realms. He wished to know whether it was necessary to proceed in this manner on account of any moral feeling that had been outraged? He should be glad to know whether it would be proper to pass this bill on account of those alleged indecencies of conduct? They ought to pause and inquire whether such conduct demanded, or could justify, a bill of this nature. It might be said that the necessity arose from the moral feeling of the country being wounded. He asked of their Lordships to open their eyes and look around the country, and then to say whether this moral feeling was not more likely to be wounded by proceeding with this measure? It was that which would give the great shock to the moral sense and feeling of the country. Nothing could have a more injurious effect on the public morals than their persevering in pressing forward this bill, and giving to the world a statement of all those disgusting scenes from which it was said to have arisen. One of the prominent parts of this bill was that which set forth that an offensive freedom and familiarity had taken place between her Majesty and a foreigner,—a menial servant. This was an extraordinary accusation. He

did not imagine that familiarity with a domestic would have been charged against her Majesty as a crime. He recollected that Mr. Burke, in his speech on economical reform, asserted "that kings are naturally lovers of low company." This he laid down as a rule. And he farther stated, that this was the reason why the most dignified and honourable persons in that House ought to be placed about the court—not, he observed, because those individuals would become better by being placed there, but that the court would be improved by their presence. Had the Queen, he demanded, the advantage of having persons of high rank and character placed about her? Was her improvement studied by placing individuals of exalted dignity and virtue about her person? No; she had not been placed in such a situation. She was deprived of those advantages, she was thrown amongst persons of a low rank, she was left to choose her companions as she could; and, therefore, she was liable to be approached by those vices and temptations which were prevalent in such a state of society. But, at all events, he would maintain that indecencies and irregularities of conduct afforded no reason for passing an *ex post facto* law, first creating the crime, and then inflicting the punishment.

The learned counsel who was heard yesterday at the bar in support of the bill argued, that when great crimes were found to exist, without any known punishment being attached by law to their perpetration, then their Lordships were bound to proceed by bills of pains and penalties, and he threw all manner of difficulties in the way of any other proceeding. He seemed to think that impeachment was a most objectionable course. That would have been very good advice for him to give to his employers; he might, with much propriety, have stated to them what measure he considered good, and what objectionable;

but it was not quite so well for him to come down and tell this to their Lordships, who were to be both jurors and judges. Such a proceeding took away all the security which an accused person would derive from the forms of justice. A bill of pains and penalties dispensed with all those forms which were found so useful in other cases; and it was not sufficient, when those forms were taken away, to tell him that the substance of justice was preserved. On this occasion, he believed, it was always pretended that the substance of justice would be secured, while its forms were set aside. This, however, was by no means a true statement of the case. Why had not Lord Strafford been proceeded against by impeachment? Because it was found that if such a course were adopted, no punishment could reach him. Therefore a bill of pains and penalties was introduced, which, he would maintain, was the foulest blot in the history of those times. He believed that the self-same motive which induced the Parliament of that day to proceed by a bill of pains and penalties, now operated on the confidential advisers of the Crown to proceed against the Queen in the same manner. They were asked, allowing the latitude which fairly belonged to the Parliament, how they could proceed by impeachment when the only punishment in that case, if guilt were proved, must be the punishment of death?—but those who argued thus had strangely omitted the punishment of incapacity, which frequently followed impeachment; and they had also put out of sight disgrace and degradation, which must be considered a very severe punishment. When the learned counsel stated, that impeachment went to the infliction of imprisonment or death, he would say that degradation and incapacity were as completely within its scope, and formed a punishment which would naturally follow from conviction. He could wish, when their

Lordships were discussing the expediency and propriety of a bill of pains and penalties, that, sitting there as Lords of Parliament, they would look anxiously to the situation in which they might chance to be placed. In this instance, he conceived, their practice very much exceeded that of the House of Commons, in paying attention to the true principles of justice, with respect to evidence which their Lordships had an opportunity of examining on oath. This was a peculiar distinction of their Lordships' House. When they had a bill of pains and penalties before them, they called witnesses to their bar, whose testimony was given under the sanction of an oath; and thus, it was the pride and glory of that House to pay a strict attention to the principles of justice on that point. Now, suppose they sent down a bill of pains and penalties to the House of Commons, after grave and mature deliberation, let their Lordships consider the mortifying predicament in which they would be placed if the other House rejected it; for, after all the anxious attention their Lordships might have paid to the evidence, the other House might be led, not to attend so much to that evidence, as to the instructions of their constituents. In the other House the measure might be bandied and tossed about, and ultimately they might come to a different decision.

The learned counsel had observed, that their Lordships would do their duty, at whatever risk it might be performed. He had no doubt, that every noble Lord would wish to do his duty in carrying the existing laws into execution, be the risk what it might: but did they not perceive the wide distinction there was between carrying the laws of the land into execution, and that which might be incurred by making an entirely new law, on the spur of the occasion? When they were told that it was necessary to have recourse to a bill of pains and penalties, because no

other mode applicable to the case was known, he would answer, that the matter should be considered with a view to the public benefit and the public safety only. Had any individual, then, argued that, under the present circumstances, they ought to incur every possible risk, in order to form a new law, — an *ex post facto* law? No, as he had said before, quite a contrary feeling prevailed. It appeared to him to be a little short of insanity to carry a new species of law into execution, when the formation of that law had nothing to do with the public safety, — when it was not called for by any apprehension of public danger. He was convinced that the public good and the public utility would be much better consulted by putting a stop to the proceeding at once, rather than blindly going on with it; and he did confidently ask of every man, who thought with him that there was more danger and disadvantage in proceeding, — who believed that the public interest was more likely to suffer by going on with the bill than by stopping its progress, — to vote with him on this occasion. There was no discredit in retracing their steps when they perceived they were in error: he saw no point of honour so false as that which impelled men, when they had once taken a particular path, to proceed in it, however improper it might be. He knew of no folly so great as persevering in a course which was plainly detrimental to the public interest. With these feelings he begged leave to move — "That it is not necessary for the public safety, or the security of the government, that the Bill intituled 'An Act to deprive her Majesty,' &c. should pass into a law."

[This motion was lost; the numbers being, for Lord Liverpool's amendment 181; for the original resolution 65.]

AGRICULTURAL DISTRESS, AND THE FINANCIAL MEASURES FOR ITS RELIEF.

(February 26. 1822.)

Lord King commenced by ridiculing the manner in which the vast promises of ministers had been fulfilled. He also adverted to the notion so industriously promulgated on the other side that to remove taxes was to hasten ruin. He said that in the year 1811, the House of Commons had thought fit to put upon record the opinions of a very grave personage (no less a man than the Chancellor of the Exchequer) on the subject of the currency; for a resolution had been entered on the Journals stating "that, in public estimation, Bank notes are equal in value to gold." In the same way he should suggest, that it would be wise in the House of Lords to register the opinion of the First Lord of the Treasury on the subject now under consideration, and it might be done in something like the following terms: "Resolved, that in public estimation the amount of taxation has not in any degree contributed to the existing distresses — that taxation is no evil — that though France and Holland have also an excess of produce, their excess has occasioned much happiness, and our excess much misery — that the only fit mode of relieving that misery is by the reduction of the rate of interest, and that the application of a surplus of 5,000,000*l.* to the sinking fund will most effectually accomplish that object." The leading article in the ministerial creed was, I believe, "that taxation is not the cause of distress;" and the noble Earl (Stanhope) had taken infinite pains, by reference to Holland and America, and by the lucky windfall of the address of the French

Chamber of Deputies, to prove that other countries were suffering, like this, from an excess of production. Some of the kingdoms of Asia were also severely distressed, and might have been brought forward, had they suited the purposes of the noble Earl; but their distress was occasioned by the too large drafts made by the government upon the industry of the people. Such was precisely the condition of Great Britain. If he understood the argument, it was this: "Taxation is not the cause of distress, because it does not produce cheap prices, and the cheapness of produce is the occasion of the existing sufferings." The noble Earl, however, seemed to forget that taxation increased the cost of raising the produce, and that cost and nothing else was the real cause of the distress. The noble Earl argued that the newly-enclosed lands should not be cultivated; but how happened it that even the old lands could not now be cultivated? They gave no profit, and that which for a century had been a source of growing emolument now paid no rent at all. The noble Earl boasted of the reductions of taxation already made; but if they had not been made, it would have been impossible for the country to have gone on. When the noble Earl said that the taxes had been reduced to a greater degree, than the country suffered by an alteration of the currency, did he mean to deny that the indirect taxes of the Excise had been amazingly augmented within the last twenty years? Did not these affect the cost of raising the produce of the soil? Leather, soap, candles, tea, and malt, were all necessaries, and the taxes on these had all their prejudicial operation. Ministers rested upon three principles: first, that excessive taxation was not the cause of distress; next, that relief was to be expected only from reducing the rate of interest; and thirdly, that the application of the 5,000,000*l.* to the sinking fund would reduce the

rate of interest all over the kingdom. Such were the doctrines preached by ministers for the last six years, with occasional varieties and transient absurdities to be sure; but still they had generally stuck to their text. One of their agreeable varieties was that a superabundant population was the cause of the distress; but this soon yielded to a superabundance of produce, and that to a superabundance of gold. For six years, however, the three principles he had mentioned had been more or less preached as gospel, and in some instances they had been swallowed with as much implicit faith as ministers could desire. Ministerial pamphlets and newspapers, and ministerial scribblers and runners had long maintained that taxation was no evil, and caused no distress; and it was a position well suited for the knaves who profited by it, and for the fools who were ruined by it. Even parliamentary majorities had been found pliant enough to admit it, but after all came the real difficulty, and it was this, that government had extracted too much from the industrious and productive, to give it to the idle and unproductive. So large a portion of the gross produce of the land was taken from those who raised it, that a sufficient remuneration was not left behind. Perhaps the noble Earl might contend that there was too much capital; and he could undoubtedly find it very easy to drive the capital out of the country. Such were the glorious absurdities of this new school of political economy. It might not be difficult to reduce the country even to a worse condition than at present; but even if the produce were diminished and the capital expelled, hereafter they might both be restored, and then the evils now complained of would be renewed. The great objection to taxation was, that it was a bar to all future improvement: it prevented capital from returning a fair profit, and industry from obtaining

its reward. To be sure the doctrine of to-day was one of exceeding comfort,—nothing need be done but to take away a great part of the produce, and all would be right: that was the scheme, the remedy, the unfailing resource of the minister of finance, who might well pride himself upon taking away what was not of the slightest utility. This was one of the delusions attempted to be practised upon public credulity. The noble Earl had next told the House that it must look to the effect of natural causes and to Providence. But who were they that gave this advice? The very men who for twenty years had been counteracting the effects of natural causes, and resisting the beneficent operations of Providence. Their excessive taxation had reduced this country to the condition of one with a bad climate and wretched soil; and yet they had the face to come to Parliament and say, "Look to Nature and Providence for a remedy!" From Providence a remedy might come, but assuredly it would never come from ministers. The noble Earl expressed great satisfaction at the large surplus of 5,000,000*l.* for the sinking fund; but he could give a stronger argument than this surplus, in favour of diminishing taxation. The noble Earl could not hear of reductions in the establishment beyond half a million; but elsewhere, as appeared by the newspapers, it had been clearly made out that if the establishments were brought down to the scale of 1792, not less than 5,500,000*l.* might be saved. Thus with the 5,000,000*l.* now proposed to be added to the sinking fund, a substantial relief might be given in the shape of not less than 10,000,000*l.* of taxes annually. Having spent nine-tenths of his life in imposing taxes, the noble Earl now stood up in his place to preach a sinking fund, and economy to accomplish it. A First Lord of the Treasury was by nature of his office a spendthrift, and he was out of his element

when he spoke of economy. After imposing heavy taxes, he proposed to make the burden a little more oppressive, as he contended, for the sake of lightening the load; he only required time, patience, and money, and he would make every body rich, contented, and happy. He (Lord K.) felt by no means sure, that the real purpose of devoting 5,000,000*l.* to the sinking fund was to reduce the debt. What security was there that it might not be applied to subsidise foreign powers and to enable the minister to use high-sounding language to them as to our national wealth and prosperity. Such language would be much more becoming after some part of the weight of taxation had been removed. He would only trouble the House with one point more, and that related to the 4,000,000*l.* to be given to parishes. At first the noble Earl seemed to feel no possible objection to this project; but after a little consideration it turned out that there was one slight obstacle to it, namely, that it was impracticable. The conclusion was, that as it could not be advanced to parishes, it ought to be lent for the purpose of jobbing in the funds. The present was most undoubtedly a period of more than ordinary distress, confined not merely to the property of agriculturists, but extending to their personal and mental feelings. So extreme was that distress — so urgent did the necessity appear for terminating it — that he thought even strong or violent measures were justifiable in the attempt to attain that object.

THE CIVIL LIST, AND ALLOWANCES TO FOREIGN MINISTERS.

(March 26. 1822.)

Lord King rose to call their Lordships' attention to the subject of which he had given notice. He proposed to move an address to his Majesty, praying that he would be pleased to order further reductions in certain parts of the civil list. It had been his intention to propose, that their Lordships should thank his Majesty for those reductions which he had already ordered, and particularly in that part which was more peculiarly personal to his Majesty; but the forms of the House prevented him from executing this grateful task, because their Lordships had not before them any regular information of what had been done. But, as a part of the public, they might be permitted to know the fact, that a reduction which Parliament could not have asked, had voluntarily proceeded from the King. This act of his Majesty had given great satisfaction to the country; but in proportion as that satisfaction was great, so was the disappointment at finding that no further reductions were to be made. And here he must repeat his regret that he was denied the opportunity of framing an address in the shape he had at first intended. He was of opinion, when the Crown made a sacrifice for the benefit of the subject, it was the duty of Parliament to thank his Majesty for so gracious an act. It appeared to him that it would have been far more decorous if a message on the subject had been brought down to both Houses, and the sense of Parliament taken upon it by voting an address. Why ministers did not adopt this course, he was at a loss to know, unless they had at length resolved to do good by stealth. As, however, the

offer of a reduction of his Majesty's personal expenses had so graciously been made, he could not but be surprised at the reluctance evinced in the other departments of the civil list to follow the laudable example which had been set them. He thought it would be casting a very improper reflection on that House, were he to suppose that a proposition for reductions in the civil list would be an ungrateful topic to their Lordships. Many of their Lordships, it was true, held situations which connected them in some measure with the subject, but he could not but think that they occupied such situations for the honour, and not for the profit attached to them. It would be difficult to place the points to which he had to call their Lordships' attention, in a clear point of view, owing to the obscurity in which the accounts of the civil list were involved. Were there indeed any public accounts not involved in obscurity? They were drawn up in the best manner possible for preventing the profane eye from looking into the arcana of office. But notwithstanding the difficulties he had to encounter in unravelling these accounts, he was confident that he could prove to their Lordships the existence of the same wasteful expenditure in the civil list as in the other departments of the state. That expenditure had been defended on the ground that influence and patronage were indispensable. But if such an application of expenditure was necessary in other places, there surely could be no need of it in that House.

With regard to the object of his motion, he could scarcely anticipate its being contended that Parliament was not competent to regulate the civil list. It was true that on his Majesty's accession, the civil list was granted him for life. But if abuses were to take place with regard to the revenue of the civil list, surely no one would say that Parliament ought not to inquire? If it should turn out that the allowance was

not sufficient, Parliament would be called upon to inquire; and if it should appear to be more than sufficient, surely Parliament was in that case equally competent to institute an investigation. He should, before he sat down, show that the allowance of the civil list was in one branch far more than sufficient, —he meant that branch which related to foreign ambassadors. By Act of Parliament, that branch was separated from the others, and the Crown had no interest whatever in keeping up the amount, as no benefit could be derived from such a proceeding. According to the act of the 56th of the late King, any saving from this class cannot be carried to another branch of the civil list, but must go to the consolidated fund. The Crown had, therefore, no interest whatever in preventing the allowance to ambassadors from being reduced. The classification which had been last made was not such as ought now to be adhered to. The estimate of 1816 was made in the contemplation of very different prices, and a state of things not at all corresponding with those now existing. He understood that besides the reduction of 30,000*l.* which was personal to his Majesty, it had been proposed to reduce to the extent of 25,000*l.* in the other departments of the civil list. This he thought was very far short of what ought to be done. He would read to their Lordships a speech of Queen Anne, which would remind them of what had been done by that great princess in a period of difficulty. In giving her assent to the bill which granted to her a civil list revenue of 800,000*l.*, she gave up to the public 100,000*l.* Her words were, — Gentlemen, I return you my kind and hearty thanks for continuing to me, for my life, the same revenue you had granted to the King. I will take great care it shall be managed to the best advantage, and while my subjects remain under the burden of such great taxes, I will straiten myself in my own expenses, rather than

not contribute to their ease and relief, with a just regard to the support of the honour and dignity of the crown. It is probable the revenue may fall very short of what it has formerly produced: however, I will give directions that 100,000*l.* be applied to the public service in this year, out of the revenue you have so unanimously given me." This, their Lordships would observe, was a sacrifice of one eighth of the whole revenue of the civil list, whereas that now made was not more than 3½ per cent. The civil list acts of 1817 and 1820 were formed on the estimate of 1815. He held that estimate in his hand. It appeared from thence that 60,000*l.* was, in 1816, and in the present year, the amount of his Majesty's privy purse. The charges on the first and second classes were precisely the same. The salaries to foreign ministers amounted to 226,950*l.*, the expenses of the household to 209,000*l.* and the salaries to the officers, 140,700*l.* The noble Lord ran over all the classes under which the expenditure of the civil list is usually stated, and showed that in every case they nearly coincided in the bill of 1820, with the schedule of 1816. It should be recollected, when this comparative statement was made, what was the comparative scale of prices at the two periods. In 1816, the price of all articles had not fallen to the state at which we now found them, nor was the distress then equal to that which now pressed upon the nation.

Having proved that the civil list expenditure of 1821 was formed on the schedule of 1816, he would proceed to show that the new arrangement of the civil list, adopted in the act of 1820, was not conducive to economy. Formerly, when a sum was voted to defray the whole expenses of his Majesty's civil list, it was thought sufficient if the crown kept within the limits of the amount granted. If it exceeded in a particular year in one branch, it retrenched in another,

and the retrenchment in the latter balanced the excess in the former case. Thus the debt, if any was created, in one class, was absorbed by the saving in another. Such was the situation of the civil list before the late arrangement. Now, what was the consequence of that arrangement? It provided that one branch of the civil list revenues might be expended without calling for any inquiry, and that the other should be brought under the revision of Parliament: and since that time the expenditure had increased. Accounts were, indeed, submitted to Parliament, and estimates were brought forward; but this was generally done in a manner which made its revision no efficient control. Such accounts were usually submitted to the House at the end of a session, when there was a thin attendance of members, or at a late hour of the night, when there was no disposition to examine them. The excess of expenditure over the allotted income was thus less effectually prevented than when the old method was observed of voting a fixed revenue, and allowing the crown to dispose of it according to its discretion. This would appear from the fact, that those services which cost the country in 1792 the sum of 898,000*l.*, now cost 1,300,000*l.*; and all the charges which were defrayed from the civil list of 1792, namely, for the royal family, junior branches, pensions, and all the classes of the civil government (some of which were by the bill of 1820 separated from the usual civil list expenses), required in the year 1816 the sum of 1,847,000*l.*, and relieved of the Windsor establishment, required in 1821 the sum of more than 1,600,000*l.* The increase, therefore, amounted to about a third of the whole expenses of the civil government, being 600,000*l.* beyond the scale of 1792. In times of distress, when the most numerous class of the people were suffering severely from the pressure of the public burthens, it became

the great officers of state to show that they sympathised with their sufferings, and bore their share of the burthen. Now, the increase which he had stated of the amount of the civil list by no means showed any such sympathy. It was true, that the great officers of state were to surrender a per-centage on their incomes, but the country had no reason to be satisfied with the proposed reduction. Various branches of the civil list called for reform, and admitted of obvious retrenchment. It would be recollected, that in 1817 a bill was introduced, on the recommendation of a special committee, to abolish sinecure places, and to substitute in their room certain pensions, to be given to the great and efficient officers of state upon their retirement from office. He had moved for a return, which had not yet been presented, to enable their Lordships to see what benefit had resulted to the public from this act, on comparing the savings which it effected with the new provision for the great officers of state which was at the same time created. The places to be abolished were about five or six. One of them was the sinecure of clerk of the pells; another, that of chief justice in eyre. He should now wish to know what advantage the country had as yet derived from these abolitions. He knew not whether a noble Viscount opposite (Lord Sidmouth) had obtained one of the pensions, but a near relative of his held the clerkship of the pells, which was one of the places included in the bill of 1817. In the reform of that year, it was proposed to abolish certain sinecures of Scotland, which were not reduced, because it was discovered that their abolition would be inconsistent with the Act of Union. This objection reminded him of a difference that arose about the promised repeal of a tax, when it was observed, that, if there was any doubt on the subject, the public should have the benefit of that doubt. "Then, in that case," it was

replied, by the friend of the treasury, "the money should come into the exchequer, as that is presumed to be for the benefit of the public." The presumption in favour of supporting a useless office, derived from the Act of the Union, was of a similar description. Mr. Burke had proposed the reduction of various places when the vested interests in them should expire; and these vested interests still, in some instances, prevented the public from deriving any advantage from his economical reforms. There was the keeper of the king's buckhounds, who was never now called upon for the performance of his official duties; and the master of the hawks, the continuance of whose office could not be defended on any ground of utility or equity, unless it was supposed that the hawks had a vested interest in their master.

He now came to the expenses of the third class of the civil list; namely, that which included the charges for foreign ambassadors and ministers. And here he would again refer to the same head of expense in 1791, and compare the charges of that year and the last. He found there a general increase of all salaries and allowances since the former period. Nothing remained as it was, and nothing was diminished. The states of Europe had undergone great changes during the interval; some of them, which were then important, had been reduced in their extent, or stripped of their influence; and others, whose power was then insignificant, had obtained considerable rank and consequence. But it was a remarkable fact, that the expenses of none of our missions were diminished by this fluctuation of power. With states whose importance was destroyed, we found it advisable to support a mission at a greater expense than when circumstances were entirely different. The return on the table was very imperfect, as it did not include the salaries and allowances of the secretaries of em-

bassy. The whole amount of the expenses of foreign embassies in 1791 was 89,590*l.* In 1821 it rose to 133,840*l.*, exclusive of the secretaries of legation, 13,850*l.*, and consuls, 30,000*l.*, making in all 177,690*l.* This did not include the amount of pensions, the extraordinaries for outfit, &c., which, when added to the former sum, would raise it to 288,000*l.* In 1791, the expense of foreign ministers and their secretaries, without including pensions, amounted to about 89,000*l.* He believed he was not far from the truth when he stated the whole charges of our foreign missions in 1791, inclusive of salaries for secretaries, pensions, and allowances, at 120,000*l.*, while the same establishment in the year 1821 cost the country 288,000*l.* There was thus an increase of 140 per cent. during last year, as compared with the year 1791. And while this increase of 140 per cent. had taken place in the expenses of our foreign missions, what reductions did government propose, in compliance with the recommendation of Parliament, and out of a regard to the distressed state of the country? They only proposed a reduction of 10 per cent.! If he were to recur to the accounts laid before Parliament in 1816, he might point out many items of great extravagance. In 1815, the sum expended in extraordinaries amounted to 145,000*l.* Lord Stewart had, at two separate times, the sums of 5000*l.* and 6000*l.*, for extraordinaries and journeys; and Lord Cathcart sums to nearly an equal amount. This was the *annus mirabilis* of diplomatic extravagance, and was not less remarkable for the profusion with which our ministers squandered the public resources, than their cold-blooded indifference to the inroads made on general liberty and national independence. The ease with which they surrendered the weak to be destroyed by the powerful, the sacrifice of human rights which they permitted or en-

couraged, were of a piece with their absurd and unnecessary profusion. The extraordinaries, which had been calculated at 50,000*l.*, amounted to 80,000*l.*; and the presents to ministers of foreign powers alone cost 15,000*l.* He could not divine on what principle these presents were distributed. He found that Russia was a great sharer in these marks of favour, and that her ministers and ambassadors had received, in the shape of presents, in one year, more than 12,000*l.*

He would again recur to the effect of the bill of 1816. It was said, that that act would prevent extravagance, by making it necessary to submit every charge to the revision of Parliament; but there had never been greater extravagance witnessed than since it passed. In a report on the civil list, presented by a select committee, it was stated, that the more the salaries increased, the pensions might be expected to diminish. Now, he would wish to ask, if this expectation had been realised, and whether the pensions had diminished? He could himself answer no; and he could tell the reason why. The diplomatic situations were now so much the rewards of parliamentary interest, that persons who had friends with the necessary influence were sent abroad to qualify themselves for receiving pensions. When they were duly qualified, they returned, and were placed on the pension list, to make way for others who qualified themselves for profitable retirement, and returned to enjoy it in the same manner. Both pensions and salaries had thus increased from the same cause,—the necessity of gratifying powerful supporters. At the time when the scale of salaries was fixed, there was some plausible reason for an increase, from the augmented price of living, and the rise in the exchange against this country. It was stated before the conclusion of the war, that in the transmission of

salaries to our agents abroad, between 25 and 30 per cent. was lost by the state of the exchange, making thus a difference of one-fourth in the value of their income. The restoration of a favourable state of exchange ought, therefore, to be the ground of a reduction to the same amount. Why had the salaries of ambassadors not been reduced in proportion to the diminished operation of the cause which had raised them? Why were these extravagant appointments to be continued? The only answer was, that they were the means of patronage. The greatness of the allowance was no benefit to persons who, without family influence, wished to dedicate their lives to diplomatic employment. It was, on the contrary, a serious injury; because it enabled persons, qualified only by family connexions, and incapable of entering into competition with them for talent and experience, to outrun them in the race, and to cut off all prospect of promotion. There were, indeed, one or two exceptions, and he might mention Sir Charles Stuart as an honourable one. But we could not expect, under the present system, such men as Mr. Ellis, or Mr. Eden, the late Lord Auckland. The great diplomatic appointments were reserved for individuals who had great family interest, or parliamentary influence — whose brothers, fathers, or relatives were members of this or the other House. It did not matter in that case what was the duty; the salary was alone consulted. The kingdom of Saxony had lost one-half of its territory; but we had sent to Dresden an ambassador with an increased salary. The Hague was formerly an important diplomatic station from the great influence of the republic of the states in the affairs of Europe. Now, neither the power nor the politics of the court of the Netherlands deserved much attention, or required much vigilance; but we maintained at the Hague and at Brussels as expensive

an embassy as at Paris. Considering the present distressed circumstances of the country, he did not exactly see why Lord Clancarty should be paid 12,000*l.* a year to enliven a Dutch town with his presence. If the latter was not very much overpaid for the duties he performed, Sir Charles Stuart was very much underpaid for his. If, again, he looked towards the Swiss Cantons, he found that a duty, which was formerly paid by 250*l.*, was now considered worth 3900*l.* The persons who performed these duties at the different periods were, however, different. It might be extremely convenient for the relative of the family which now engrossed the board of control to receive such a salary; but it was not so easy to see what equivalent advantage Mr. Wynn could render the public. Mr. Gibbon had observed of Sir William Hamilton, that he corresponded more with the Royal Society than with the King's ministers, and was more engaged in observing the phenomena of Mount Vesuvius than in watching the politics or the conduct of the court of the Two Sicilies. Our ambassador in Switzerland, in this view, might be of great use to the progress of mineralogical science, if his taste lay in that track; but he was too highly paid for any diplomatic exertions which he might be required to make. This gentleman had been sent to Dresden long ago, where he was likewise well paid, and where some losses which he had incurred had been amply compensated. He had his library burnt, containing, no doubt, the *Jus Gentium*, Puffendorff, and other appropriate works; and for this he received an indemnity of 5414*l.* This was the greatest diplomatic job he had ever heard of. A gentleman was to receive 3900*l.* for a duty executed formerly for 250*l.* What was the nature of the defence which was to be set up for all this extravagance, he was at a loss to conjecture. He could scarcely imagine how the

office of a third secretary of state, how the existence of so extensive a system of diplomacy, and such a host of retired diplomatists, could be justified in times like the present. Surely no one would contend that it was to maintain the balance of power in Europe! If it were asserted that it was necessary in order to maintain the balance of power in the House of Commons, that would be an intelligible proposition; but to talk of the balance of power in Europe at the present day, would indeed be absurd. Did the noble Earl opposite mean to contend that, in order to preserve the independence of the north of Italy, it was necessary that we should have an ambassador at Turin with 6000*l.* a year? Would he say, that if we had not residents at the various German courts at a similar expense, the independence of Germany could not be maintained? Would the noble Earl assert that the Netherlands would be overrun by France unless we had an ambassador at that court with a salary of 12,600*l.*? If the noble Earl were to declare all this, many of the individuals themselves seemed determined to prove, by their non-residence, that the noble Earl was in the wrong; for they were seen walking about the town, as if to show that the business which they were appointed to do could be done as well without them — that the diplomatic curates were as competent to the discharge of the functions of their offices as the rectors. He begged, however, to do his Majesty's present government justice for the economy which they had exhibited. They had actually dismissed one clerk from the office of one of the secretaries of state. Nor had they sent any ambassador to the court of Lisbon, to compliment the King of Portugal on his return to his native dominions; although a few years ago, before the king returned, they did send an ambassador for that purpose. With a due regard to economy, and

to the burthens of the country, that appointment had been dispensed with.

Now he wished to know distinctly, the total amount of reductions made under the act of the 56th of the late King, and the extent to which they had been carried, according to the provisions of that act, to the consolidated fund. This class of the civil list was extremely important. What he complained of was, that there were too many embassies of the highest rank; and he doubted not that the intercourse with other states might be maintained with much less both of form and expense. We had formerly no ambassador either at Vienna or Petersburgh; and what was there in our situation that should render such a change expedient at this moment? On the contrary, every diminution of expenditure that was practicable ought to be adopted. There could be nothing improper or disrespectful in applying to the crown for a curtailment of expense, and as near an approximation as possible to the establishment of 1792. He doubted not the gracious disposition of the crown to comply with their representations. But he should perhaps hear it urged, that our foreign ministers had either received no increase in their allowances, or no increase beyond what was absolutely necessary. His belief was, that the same would be said, if their salaries were doubled or quadrupled; and that the retention of influence and patronage was the sole object and motive of all this extravagance. It might be argued, however inconsistently, that there were now many more English travellers whom our ambassadors must of course entertain than at former periods. On other occasions, his Majesty's ministers had made it a matter of complaint, that the number of English travellers was so considerably increased. The fact was, that these large allowances, however they might be defended under this or that pretext, evidently proceeded from

a design, long entertained, of augmenting the influence of government. Even at home the treasury was not satisfied without drawing to itself the influence of all the other boards and departments. The customs as well as the excise had yielded up their proportions. The expense of collecting the revenue was 1,250,000*l.* greater than it was formerly; and here again was a vast accession of patronage. So, too, with the army and navy; the system under which they were governed had the utmost tendency to increase it. Let their Lordships consider also the office of commander-in-chief, and the staff annexed to it: let them reflect on the office of third secretary of state; on that nest of jobs, the India board, and the utter uselessness of either one or other of these two last departments. It surely could not be denied either that the affairs of India might be transferred to the colonial office, or the care of our colonies to the India board. The support of influence could alone account for the maintenance of these offices. They were evidently kept up for no other purpose, or at least to this purpose every other consideration gave way. This was now more than apparent. It had been lately, and, for the first time, shamelessly avowed in another place, that offices, whether useful or not in other respects, were sometimes necessary on account of the influence which they afforded. Thus it should seem, that the present ministers lived upon influence, — that it was their only natural support, — that upon it their authority, power, and existence entirely depended. If their military administration were examined with so much attention, and the triumphs of their foreign policy ever so justly estimated, it would be found, that there was no campaign which they had carried on so successfully as that against the independence of Parliament. In pursuance of this object, they had not been led away into petty diversions; there were

no untried schemes, like the nibblings at West India islands, or expeditions to the Helder, which had made them forget, or sacrifice for a moment, their original and favourite purpose. All their talents had been displayed, and all their perseverance exercised, in this warfare. Here they had been regular, uniform, undeviating in their conduct; and he must do them the justice to say, that although, in whatever was salutary or good, they had shown themselves to be powerless, in all that was mischievous they were neither feeble nor inactive, and had, during the thirty years that the government had been vested in their hands, done more to corrupt the purity, and overthrow the independence of Parliament, than had been done for a century before. No reason could be assigned for not extending reductions and abolishing useless places, except that the patronage of ministers would be thereby diminished; and the noble Earl and his colleagues declined the saving of millions where it was practicable, because it would leave them less with which to gratify their supporters and adherents. He had heard of millions sacrificed in order to add a peppercorn to the revenue; here millions were sacrificed with views extremely different, and consequences much more deplorable. Important as would be the saving to the country by the reductions which he recommended, that advantage would be as nothing compared with the advantages arising from the diminution of the undue influence of the crown. The noble Lord concluded by moving the following address:—

"We, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled, most humbly represent to your Majesty, that the expenses of the civil government have been greatly increased in various branches formerly charged upon the civil list revenue, now forming part of the supplies of the

year, but more particularly in that class of the civil list which comprises the salaries and allowances of foreign ministers. That by an act passed in the 56th year of his late Majesty, provision was made for the future annual charges of the several classes of his Majesty's civil list in consequence of an estimate laid before Parliament for that purpose; and that, with regard to the expenses of the third class, it was farther provided, that in case any surplus or saving should have arisen in that class, it should be lawful for the lord high treasurer, or commissioners of the treasury, and they were thereby required, to direct the same to be carried to the account of the consolidated fund.

"That the expenses of the said third class appear greatly to exceed what is required for the public service, and that the reduction of the same, and the application of the saving made in consequence thereof, according to the provisions of the 56th of his late Majesty, would, in the present distressed situation of the country, be conducive to the relief of your Majesty's suffering subjects.

"We therefore approach your Majesty with the humble expressions of the earnest hope, which, from your Majesty's constant disposition to meet the wishes of your people, as well as from the proofs recently given of your Majesty's paternal attention to the distresses of your subjects, we confidently entertain, that your Majesty will immediately give the necessary orders for effecting a reduction of the expenses attending the appointment of foreign ministers, and also for making such further reduction in the other charges of the civil government, as may be consistent with the support of the true dignity of your Majesty's crown, which it will at all times be our anxious desire to preserve unimpaired."

The motion was negatived.

NAVAL AND MILITARY PENSIONS BILL.

(June 27. 1822.)

The House having resolved itself into a committee, Lord King moved the following preamble, which he thought was more suitable than the one which now preceded it.

"Whereas an impatience of taxation, no less ignorant than irresistible, pervades all classes of his Majesty's subjects, and it is highly expedient to afford some relief; and whereas the *minimum* of relief which will give satisfaction, and the least intelligible plan which can plausibly be stated, is that of extending the burden of the military and naval pensions over a longer period of time than the natural lives of the present annuitants, and defraying the expense of the first sixteen years by a series of annual loans; and whereas by an act of 57 Geo. 3. cap. 65., a very large provision has been made for the maintenance and half-pay of the persons now holding high and efficient offices, and it is desirable to secure the continuance of the same high and efficient public men in the offices they now hold, in order to avoid increasing the amount of the dead service or half-pay so profusely provided in case his Majesty's present confidential servants should resign their offices, contrary to all true economy and the intent and meaning of themselves and of the act, and of every act of this present Parliament; and whereas there is or will be a sinking fund of five millions applicable to the redemption of the national debt, to the relief of future generations at the expense of the present; and whereas it is also become expedient to relieve the present ignorant and impatient generation, at the

expense of posterity, which necessary relief could be effected most advantageously by a reduction from the said sinking fund of a sum equal to the amount of revenue derived from those taxes which it is become so highly necessary to repeal; but whereas his Majesty's confidential servants now holding high and efficient offices, have solemnly declared that the said sinking fund, to the full amount of 5,000,000*l.* aforesaid, shall be maintained inviolate; and whereas it is highly necessary that the wisdom of the said high and efficient public men should be upheld by the lords spiritual, and also by the lords temporal, and commons in Parliament assembled; therefore be it enacted, by and with the advice of the same, that a series of loans shall be raised in a circuitous manner, and that the lords commissioners of the treasury shall have power to lend to themselves, and to borrow of themselves, and to conceal the whole transaction from themselves, and from all other ignorant and well-disposed persons. And be it further enacted, that the commissioners for the redemption of the national debt shall likewise be the trustees appointed by this act for raising money on annuities to provide for the payment of the naval and military pensions, and that they shall in their capacity of trustees create stock, and in their other capacity of commissioners for the redemption of the national debt, shall purchase that same stock; or, if more expedient and inexplicable, shall issue exchequer bills, and invest and re-invest the proceeds thereof through all the mazes of the transfer office, according to the will and pleasure of the chancellor of the exchequer, and make centuple entry thereof, provided always that the aggregate of confusion and perplexity shall agree with the same sum, as the deduction of the requisite amount from the sinking fund."

NEGOTIATIONS RELATIVE TO SPAIN.

(April 17. 1823.)

Lord King said that the papers which had been laid on the table had certainly given great satisfaction; the French ministers must be well satisfied; his Majesty's ministers were satisfied with them; and the satisfaction of the public must be extreme, for every body laughed at them. What he now wished to know was the expense at which all this satisfaction had been obtained. He had read the whole of the papers, and he thought with a noble Earl near him, that his Majesty's ministers had been completely duped. They appeared indeed to have all that prostration of the mind and will so pleasing to divines, but so unprofitable to diplomatists. Looking at the whole of the transactions, he was firmly persuaded that the French ministry must have known that the noble Earl opposite would be pleased at being duped. What he now wished was, to know what had been the expense of this extraordinary diplomacy? Every man must expect to be duped once in his life, and if it were done by a person who had before borne an ordinary good character, there was not much in it; but after the previous character of the house of Bourbon, to be duped by them was most extraordinary. The noble Lord concluded by moving for an account of the extraordinary expenses of foreign missions between the 1st of September and 31st of December, 1822.

LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S MOTION RESPECTING THE NEGOTIATIONS RELATIVE TO SPAIN.

(April 24. 1823.)

Lord King declared that upon a review of all the transactions between France and Spain, the only inference he could draw was that England was to be kicked and cuffed about by foreign powers because of the pusillanimity of a disgraced government. He had read the papers on their Lordships' table with shame, grief, and disappointment. Throughout them he could not find one honest or manly sentiment, one opinion suited to the occasion, one declaration becoming the characters of candid, upright, and fair statesmen. He would not admit that this forbearance was attributable to a prudential policy. It was cold apathy and indifference to the cause of Spain, and the cause of liberty. To find a parallel for such conduct on the part of a British ministry, their Lordships must go back to the disgraceful times of the Stuarts. In the reign of Charles II. alone could be found a similar instance of baseness. When in 1685, Louis XIV. determined to annex the Spanish Netherlands to the dominion of France, the language of Charles was like that of the present ministers, "Come what may, his Majesty is determined to be no party to it." This was exactly the base principle of the base government of Charles II. What was the meaning of that passage in the account of the transactions at Verona, in which the plenipotentiary of Great Britain, on learning the determination of France to invade Spain, declared that nothing remained for him to do, but to require the good offices of the British ambassador at Madrid, to allay the ferment which must

attend the development of the French aggression? It was not a little remarkable that upwards of a century ago, when the violent events he had alluded to were pending, the negotiator for England, on the Continent, was Lord Churchill; Mr. Fox, in contrasting that nobleman's situation when he was an ambassador and when he was a soldier, had truly remarked how great he appeared at one time, and how little at another. The reason of this difference was, that he was at one time in the field gloriously asserting the liberties and independence of nations; at another the tool of a base government, having nothing in view but the suppression of free principles and the maintenance of the legitimates of that day. There were some persons who were fond of comparing the Duke of Wellington to the Duke of Marlborough. He was sorry that in this part of their respective careers, the resemblance was so striking. The noble president of the council had pronounced upon the noble Duke an unqualified panegyric: he saw nothing to justify it in his correspondence at Verona, nor in his instructions to Lord Fitzroy Somerset. The negotiations in which he had been engaged had had no other result than to rivet the despotism of the Continent. Looking back to the peace of Paris, he could see nothing in the negotiations on that occasion but a surrender of the real interests of Europe; and for what? To re-establish the Bourbons upon the throne of France, and to extinguish, as far as possible, every trace of popular rights. It was true that the blood and treasure of England had profusely flowed to stem the torrent of continental despotism; but where was the glory in the result? One great despot had been overwhelmed, but three had been erected in his place. It was a maxim that limits were set to the most perfect works of human genius. So it was with the treaties of Paris and Vienna: their peace-making

had ended abruptly, and had left the world again involved in a struggle for liberty. These being his sentiments, he should support the original address.

AUSTRIAN LOAN BILL.

(March 11. 1824.)

Lord King objected strongly to the preamble of the bill, since it did not mention the sum received from Austria as being the payment of a debt. Without such an acknowledgment in direct terms, the clause in the preamble was unintelligible. Nobody could certainly deny that we had advanced money to the government of Austria under a promise of repayment, and that this was our only return. What else was necessary to constitute a debt? It had been said that our money had been expended in wars; but for whose advantage had those wars been carried on? For the advantage of the Emperor of Austria. It was true the Emperor had not succeeded in those wars: but that was not our fault. It, however, showed that the Emperor had then made the same kind of miscalculation, respecting the difficulties of the contest, and the probabilities of success which he had since made respecting the amount of his obligations to this country, and the sum necessary for fulfilling them. Had the transaction between the Emperor and this country been placed on its proper footing, either in the preamble of the bill, or in the statements of the minister, much of what was now said against the Austrian government might have been spared. People would not probably in that case have been so malicious as to have talked of those two millions and a half, as being

saved out of a bankrupt's property, as a composition with an insolvent, as half-a-crown in the pound, wrung from an unwilling or dishonest debtor; nor would the ministers have insulted the Emperor, by pretending surprise that he should pay his debts, and calling that payment a "god-send." In order to show that the preamble might have been more precise, and have denominated this money as the payment of a debt, he begged to call the attention of their Lordships to the transactions out of which the debt arose.

The minister of the day, Mr. Pitt, had called upon Parliament to lend this money to the government of Austria on what he termed good security, the very best security. A regular contract was entered into, the deed was signed, sealed, and delivered. Mr. Pitt had boasted of the certainty which it gave us of recovering our due; he even went the length of saying, that if the Emperor refused to pay us voluntarily, we could sue him, like a reluctant debtor, in his own courts. Now here he would beg leave to ask whether the minister had stated this last security from excess of caution, or for the purposes of delusion? This appeared to him a very proper question to be solved by the Pitt club, and he should expect to see it answered at its next meeting. Some persons were disposed to put the latter interpretation on the words of the minister; while others had considered the money transaction mentioned in the bill before the House, as the result of a legal proceeding, or the proceeds arising out of the sale of a bankrupt's estate. God forbid that he should so consider it! God forbid that he should insinuate anything against the honour of his imperial Majesty, or even hint a suspicion that the Emperor had not paid his just debts! As our power to sue him in his own courts had been so broadly stated, he (Lord King) had a right to assume that our rulers had done so, that the suit had been carried on for the last twenty years, and

that, as it happened nearer home, a great part of the contested property had been swallowed up in fees of court and other law expenses [*a laugh*]. The great cause of "Rex *versus* Emperor," involving so vast an interest, must have been heard and re-heard — it must have been considered and re-considered — it must have been argued and re-argued before the Austrian great judge of equity. The court must have taken home the papers; and then the court must have lost the papers; and then the court must have required to have its memory refreshed, and to be supplied with new papers. The lawyers, also, must have had refreshers. The court afterwards must have fixed a day for judgment, and that day having arrived, the court must not have given judgment; and then the court, under a solemn promise to give judgment, must have fixed upon another day; and when that other day came, the court must have had a doubt, and have postponed its decision to another day; and when that other day arrived, the court must have required again to be refreshed. At last, when the law and the lawyers had had their full swing, and twenty years had been spent in forwarding the cause, the court must have pronounced its decree, by which the Emperor was ordered to pay the account of 2,500,000*l.*; while we paid by far the greater sum to the lawyers, and for the bill of costs [*a laugh*]. We had thus obtained only 2,500,000*l.* out of six millions, which was the original loan, and we had lost all the interest, which in the course of twenty years had swelled the debt to twenty millions; but we could not very much complain when we considered what might have happened nearer home, namely, that we might have lost, not only the original principal sum of six millions, but might have expended, in an attempt to recover it, the other two-and-a-half millions, which we were now enabled to pocket. With the proceeds of this suc-

cessful suit at Vienna, ministers would be enabled to repeal our law taxes — to give us law cheaper at home. Another consequence probably of this expensive litigation with the Emperor, probably was a bill to diminish the expenses of law proceedings for the recovery of small debts. Government had found it so difficult to recover this debt from Austria, that it was willing to facilitate the recovery of other debts. Then from the experience of the evils of delay in our suit with the Emperor, ministers had seen the propriety of instituting inquiry into the causes of delay in the Court of Chancery [*a laugh*]. All these beneficial consequences he was glad to perceive had resulted from the termination of this long-protracted suit at Vienna. Now, he thought ministers ought to have inserted a proper description of these transactions, and an avowal of the debt, in the preamble to the bill before the House.

IRISH TITHES COMPOSITION AMENDMENT BILL.

(June 10. 1824.)

Lord King said, that the right reverend Prelate had not directed his views to those material parts of the case which involved the question of first-fruits, tithes, and episcopal pluralities. He had, however, stood forward in defence of that long abandoned damsel, the Church of Ireland, who had so long stood in need of a defender — aye, and of a reformer. He had, however, promised a ripe harvest of good effects for the future, provided there was no profane attempt to interfere with that establishment. Most completely did he differ with that right reverend Prelate as to

the uses and benefits of the establishment. He thought it was literally what Mr. Burke had called it, when he had said "Non est ecclesia sed magnum latrocinium." Such was the character which even the right reverend Prelate's favourite authority had pronounced on that church which had been that night so lauded. The right reverend Prelate in passing his panegyric had kept studiously out of view the whole process of the tithe system, the valuators, the proctors, the bailiffs, and the whole dramatis personæ of that cortège. The truth was, that the less that was said as to the merits of that church the better. If it were as perfect as the right reverend Prelate represented it to be, why the necessity for those legislative acts, which were to regulate the tithe system, to prevent the scandalous pluralities, and to enforce residence? We had had bills for the amendment, and for the re-amendment of the tithe system. In short, everything had been done but "that one thing needful"—a reduction of the church establishment of Ireland, as the church of Scotland had been reduced to make it suitable to the wants, the temper, and the wishes of the people. The government would feel the advantage of such a limitation, as it would thereby be relieved from all the difficulties and embarrassments which these conflicting interests produced. What had been the observation of Dr. Paley with respect to that church? He had described it as "a proud, haughty, domineering aristocracy of episcopal wealth and property." Was not, he would ask, the potato tithe a novelty introduced within the last forty years? Was it not limited to the unhappy and miserable potato eaters of the province of Munster, and wholly unknown to Ulster and Connaught? These were features of the church establishment of Ireland which the right reverend Prelate had kept out of view. But these were nevertheless the true features of that

establishment. It was these that had called into life and energy that appalling personage, of whom so much had been said on a former occasion — the cruel Delany; "who from his horrid hair shakes terror and tithe law." It was in the south of Ireland that this monster was matured. Nay, so prolific was the progeny, that the potato tithe of Munster furnished a succession of Delanys for other parts. Compared with that race the furies of antiquity were models of beneficence.

THE KING'S SPEECH ON OPENING THE SESSION.

(Feb. 3. 1825.)

Lord King observed, that he agreed with the address of the noble Lords, that the resources of the country had been relieved, and its industry stimulated and improved. He gave his cordial approbation to those measures by which this result had been produced. It was the more pleasing to him to state this approbation, as the commercial regulations and measures of foreign policy, on which their Lordships were congratulated, had been pressed upon the government by himself and his friends. They had given an advice to ministers which, though at first opposed and neglected, had at last prevailed. As ministers had thus come round to the opinions of opposition, he hoped it would not be the last time that he should have to congratulate them on their docility. He hoped that they would take advice on a very important question, the corn laws, and that ere long they would introduce consistent measures for the trade in grain. As far as the speech from the throne was the speech of the chief magistrate

of the country, he received it with all respect and honour. He admitted that the situation of England was prosperous and fortunate; but their Lordships should not forget that such was not the situation of six millions of catholics on the other side of the Irish Channel, suffering under a misgovernment which was a disgrace to our age and country. The world, in general, was now too wise to allow governments to inflict penalties, or to withhold privileges on account of differences of religious faith. States now left their subjects to adopt any creeds they chose, without depriving them of their civil rights. The English government was the only government, which carried on a contest with a large portion of its empire on account of religion. Ireland and Turkey might be cited as the only countries in Europe, where whole races were oppressed and punished on account of their faith. The Grand Sultan had been endeavouring to make converts of the Greeks, as the government of England had been endeavouring to make converts of the Irish Catholics; but they had not succeeded. When the unhappy Greeks complained of the sufferings which they endured, and applied to be treated a little better than Mussulman dogs, the Sultan sent for his grand vizier, to ask him what was to be done. This grand vizier had at first been a friend, and then an enemy of the Grand Sultan. He had thus lost much of the favour of his master, and therefore much of his influence. The head of the Turkish ministry then suffered himself to be bearded in his own divan, by his officers and serving-men. He was understood to be hostile to some of the claims of the Greeks. The next person in the divan, in point of influence, was the reis-effendi, who was friendly to the just demands of this persecuted people. This officer, it was well known, was minister for foreign affairs. His foreign policy deserved and obtained general approbation.

In this part of his duties he conducted himself with remarkable liberality and talent. He had done great good, and gained considerable popularity to the government of the sultan, and would have done more had his measures not been opposed by his less enlightened colleagues. He, in fact, was the only man of real genius in the whole divan [*a laugh*], and was esteemed an ornament among Turkish statesmen, being gifted with poetical talents, and capable of showing "The rage of the vulture, and love of the turtle," as best suited the occasion. The kiaya-bey, or Turkish minister of the interior, was opposed to him, and was likewise an enemy of the Greeks. In his capacity of kiaya-bey, he was a fair minister, but was no match for the reis-effendi. He had dismissed his predecessor from the divan, and certain verses of his were remembered, in which he had held him up to ridicule in somewhat of the following manner:—

> "Cheer him, cheer him, brother Hiley,
> Cheer him, cheer him, brother Bragge."

The triumph of the reis-effendi over this officer, who was an enemy of the Greeks, was complete. The capitan-pasha, another member of the divan, was likewise against the Greeks, in their claims for civil privileges; but the leader of the opposition to their cause was the head mufti or chief of the Mussulman law. This officer was an enemy to all change. He had regularly opposed all improvements in trade, — all improvements in law, — all improvements in foreign policy. He had been, and always proclaimed himself, the greatest champion of existing abuses. He was the most consummate intriguer of the whole divan [*a laugh*]. He had at one time taken up the cause of the Sultana; but he turned against her when he found that by continuing to support her he would forfeit his place in the divan. He then took up the

cause of her enemies. At one time there was a proposal to admit some Greeks into the regular troops, or body of janissaries. He then raised such a fanatical cry against this measure — very similar to the cry of "No Popery!" in this country, — that he turned out of the divan the members who had adopted it. He succeeded himself to office, and he no sooner got in than he agreed to the very thing against which he had clamoured. He kept the Sultan's conscience and his own; but it was never remarked of him, that his conscience opposed his interests. He was first employed in office by the grand vizier, "who weathered the storm." He went out after his death, but having afterwards come in again, as an enemy to the Greeks, he had ever since continued to act with some of their friends rather than again lose his office. Having minutely studied the Turkish constitution, he had found out that it was essentially Mahometan, and therefore hostile to Greek privileges. He had resolved, therefore, to continue staunch to the cause of intolerance, and was surrounded with the mollahs, the imans, and the dervishes, who encouraged him in his hostile purposes. To complete the picture of this divided divan, the members who composed it had resolved, that in certain questions they should agree, and in certain questions they might continue to differ without breaking up their union. Such was the harmonious discord of this Turkish council. Having seen the evils resulting from such a divan, — having seen the Mussulman empire torn by this intolerance of some members of it to their Greek brethren, and their quarrels among themselves — he would pray that this country might not be delivered up to such a divided cabinet [*a laugh*].

UNLAWFUL SOCIETIES IN IRELAND BILL.

(March 3. 1825.)

Lord King said, he could not see the force of the arguments urged in support of this measure. The noble Earl (Liverpool,) had contended, that the Association was dangerous, because it seemed peaceably disposed,—because it had contributed to produce tranquillity in Ireland. This reminded him of what he was informed had somewhere taken place during the rebellion; namely, that sometimes persons had been hanged for saving the lives of others, because from that it was concluded, that they must have influence with their party, and were therefore equally guilty. From the observations of the noble Earl, one would be led to conclude, that the Irish code was one of perfection and most exemplary mildness. For his own part, he differed totally in opinion with the noble Earl. It appeared to him, that Ireland would bear a resemblance to hell if this Act should pass; for what could be more fiend-like than to deny to millions their just rights, and to take away from the oppressed even the power of complaint? He lamented to see parliament year after year adding one law to another, accumulating penal enactment on penal enactment, for the purpose, as it was pretended, of tranquillizing Ireland; when the only way to tranquillize that country was to repeal the whole of them. He entertained no such doubts as the noble Earl had expressed, upon the efficacy of this bill. Those who suggested it had been too long in the habit of making such laws; they knew their business too well, to propose the enactment of any useless, inoperative measure. He was sorry to see parliament once more in battle array against the people

of Ireland. He could assure the noble Earl that they did not view the measures of government in the same light as the noble Earl did. They could not see that so much had been done for their benefit: nor could that country ever be tranquil, until the just demands of the Catholics were complied with. If Europe should again become convulsed, and this country be once more assailed by dangers, ministers themselves would be the first to come down and propose the measure of relief which they now so pertinaciously refused. It was remarkable, that the noble Earl had studiously avoided to mention any particular instance of misconduct or abuse, on the part of the Catholic Association. And yet, from what had passed in the other House, it was clear that its necessity was endeavoured to be established on such alleged misconduct. What became of the Ballybeg case, on which such stress had been laid? The noble Earl had given it up entirely. He acted most judiciously. He knew, notwithstanding the great dependence that the originator of the bill placed upon it, that it was blown into the air,—there was not one word of truth in it from the beginning to the end. But, then, the whole of our conduct towards Ireland was one of marked conciliation. Conciliation, forsooth! As a proof of that conciliatory treatment, he would refer their Lordships to a paper on their table. It appeared from that document, that, in the year 1823, the number of persons committed under the insurrection-act, in the County of Tipperary, was 497; and that of these, 462 were acquitted even by Irish justice. Taking the number of persons committed in that year, throughout all Ireland, it appeared that the number imprisoned was 1707, and that of these 1466 were acquitted. But it would seem, from the statement of the noble Earl, that such was the pure administration of justice in Ireland, that the Catholic Association had no pretence for interference.

Why, it was only that evening that he himself laid on their table a petition from three individuals, who declared that they had been deprived of their just rights of admission to the corporation; and were only enabled, though their fathers and grandfathers had been freemen, to obtain that admission through the interposition of the Catholic Association. We knew from the highest authority that there were two great parties in that country; the one, predominant and oppressive; the other, on all occasions obliged to give way. Indeed, a noble and high authority (Lord Redesdale) had declared, that in Ireland there existed one law for the rich, and another for the poor, and that both were equally bad. The noble Earl had quoted a passage from a speech of Mr. Fox. The sentiment it contained was just and wise; but he would ask, whether in Ireland it was not the tyranny of the few over the many, and not of the many over the few. He defied the ingenuity of the most subtle reasoner to make out that the Orange body was the most numerous. It would be the excess of injustice, under such circumstances, to legislate against the claims of the weak, when they associated for the purposes of mutual protection. Who were the authors of that injustice? Their Lordships,—who refused to the people of Ireland that relief from restrictions which necessarily led to a denial of justice. Was it for that House to complain of Catholic Associations? As well might the wolf complain of the sheep who collected together to prevent themselves from being individually eaten up. We had now, for the last twenty-five years, been called upon, session after session, to give the Catholics of Ireland a just participation in the blessings of the constitution. The question had, indeed, assumed the complexion of a chancery suit; and there was manifested an equal callousness and insensibility to the prayers of the suitors. To carry on the analogy, the

present measure was very like what was called in chancery a cross-bill; and if persevered in, he was disposed to believe that they would both terminate, as chancery suits generally ended, in the ruin of both parties. But, the whole of the evils which afflicted Ireland might be attributed to the divisions that existed in the cabinet of this country. And yet it was strange, that though on the recognition of South-American independence, and on the claims of the Cathólics, they were divided, yet, when an addition was to be made to the penal laws,—when some inroad on the rights of the people was to be carried,—they were all unanimous. They illustrated what was too common in life,—that when there was a mixture of the good and the bad, the evil principle too frequently predominated.

THE KING'S SPEECH ON OPENING THE SESSION.—THE ADDRESS THEREUPON.

(February 2. 1826.)

Lord King said, that the noble mover and seconder of the address had both mentioned the present embarrassments, but he did not find that either of them had said a word on the causes which led to them. He would endeavour to supply the omission. The causes were, in some degree, to be attributed to the government; in a greater degree to the country banks, and in a still greater degree to the Bank of England monopoly. He would tell their Lordships how the government caused this mischief. It had prolonged the existence of the one and two pound notes. It had passed a law to allow of country banks issuing them. The measure permitting this was the measure

of ministers. As far as the present evil arose from the bankers issuing such notes, to this degree it had been caused by his Majesty's government. There was also a strong tendency in the measures of ministers to reduce the rate of interest; and for this purpose, the one and two pound note Bill had been passed. They had reduced the rate of interest on exchequer bills, in order to promote a great future reduction of interest. Their conduct reminded him of the memorable speech of a memorable ex-chancellor of the Exchequer, in which that noble lord had stated, that it would be no benefit, if every individual when he awoke in the morning found a guinea in his pocket; but it would be a great benefit if he found the rate of interest reduced when he awoke. Such was the sentiment of the accredited organ of government, and ministers now seemed to think that it was no benefit that wealth should be spread abroad amongst all the people, but a great benefit that it should be collected into heaps. The ex-chancellor would be a proper organ for the projectors of last year, who removed the useless guinea out of the people's pocket, and supplied its place by receipts for stock or scrip for loans. He would recommend the people, as the proper use of such paper, to subscribe it to build a monument to this ex-chancellor of the Exchequer. He had said, that the Bank of England had contributed to the distress; and he did not know any period of distress for the last thirty or fifty years, in which the conduct of that establishment had not been injurious. Let their Lordships look back, and they would find that the Bank of England had, in every case, aggravated the distress by its conduct. It was a most faulty machine. It was impossible that a Bank so incorporated could do good. If their Lordships were to set about erecting an establishment to do mischief, they would erect it

on the very principles which governed that corporation; they would give it a monopoly, remove from it all fear of rivalry, and they would connect it with the government. The directors had no interest in the profit or loss of the concern; they had neither hopes nor fears for the result of their conduct; they had no interest in managing it well, but they had a strong interest in mismanaging it. The machine was altogether too vast to be well conducted; and this appeared to him one of the strongest reasons which could be urged for putting an end to the monopoly. The Bank, it might be supposed, had not produced the late crisis; but he contended that it was art and part in the whole. It had increased the issues of bank notes at the beginning of last year. He did not say this on his own authority, but on the authority of the best informed merchants in the city of London. Mr. Tooke had stated, in a book which well deserved their Lordships' attention, that the issues of the Bank of England amounted in April 1823, to 17,750,473*l.* in April 1824, 19,011,575*l.*; and in April 1825, to 20,881,123*l.* This was a very considerable increase, amounting, as stated by Mr. Tooke, in the year 1825 to an increase in the Bank circulation of three millions, as compared with the issue of 1823. He could not better express the effect this had had on the country than in the words of the author.—"Speculative operations, embracing so many commodities of great importance in point of amount, necessarily created a large mass of paper, and of transactions on mere credit, thus adding to a circulation already swelled by the increase of country bank-notes. Such were the circumstances under which the Bank of England issued, and for some months maintained in circulation, an increased amount of its notes. Although this increased issue by the Bank did not alone cause the great additional excitement of the spirit of specu-

lation which followed, yet it gave a fresh and powerful stimulant to that spirit, and assisted in converting incipient delusion into absolute insanity." The noble Earl opposite was willing, he believed, to control the conduct of the Bank, but he had found the Bank too strong for him. The noble Earl also had been willing to prevent the issue of the one and two pound notes, but he had found the country bankers and the country gentlemen too strong for him. They wanted these notes to keep up prices and encourage speculation. The noble Earl was not strong enough for these gentlemen; and he was afraid he would not be strong enough to carry the measure which he had talked of last session for revising the Corn Laws. The noble Earl had then stated distinctly, that he meant this session to revise the Corn Laws; and he should like to know if he really meant to do anything on the subject of those laws? [The Earl of Liverpool stated across the table that he would answer that question by-and-bye.] He was afraid, from the looks of the noble Earl, that nothing was to be done this session with the Corn Laws. The noble Earl was probably afraid of again meeting with such a signal defeat as he had met with last year on the Canada Corn Bill. That defeat was a disgrace which could never be wiped out. The measure was a measure of government; it had passed the Commons, and was brought up to their Lordships. Then came down a noble Earl to oppose it. The noble Earl opposite had implored him to allow it to pass for a year and a half. No; it could not be. For a year, then; and a year was granted to the government. This was the most disgraceful proceeding he had ever witnessed. Let their Lordships only suppose a Lord A., or a Lord B., opposing a ministerial measure brought up from the other House, under the ministry of Mr. Pitt or Lord Grenville; the thing was impossible. It reminded him of Charles II. complaining to the Dutch am-

bassador that his government was not treated wtih the same respect by the Dutch as that of Cromwell:— "Your Majesty must recollect," replied the ambassador, "that Cromwell was a very different sort of a man." So, if the ministers were to remind Noble Lords of the way in which they conducted themselves towards Mr. Pitt or Lord Grenville, the reply might be, "but you are very different sort of men." He feared the country could have no hopes of seeing any alteration in the Corn Laws this session. If that were so, he was persuaded that nothing but discussion, repeated discussion, could produce any good; and he was resolved on every occasion to express his opinion on this most detestable law. It was the most gigantic job ever practised. It was difficult to say which was greatest, the unfeeling avarice which suggested it, or the bold impudence which stated that it was for the public good. It was the most enormous job ever heard of in the whole history of misrule. The West India job only made us pay more for our sugar. The East India job, when Leadenhall Street was in the fulness of its power, and monopolised all the trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope, without a rival, was in comparison nothing to the job of the Corn Laws. Many references had of late been made to that branch of the legitimate House of Bourbon which ruled in Spain, and which had been held up as the most foolish of all God's vicegerents on earth; but what had they done equal in folly to our Corn Laws? They had given to one man the monopoly of the trade of Buenos Ayres; they might have given to one city the monopoly of all the trade of Mexico and Peru, but the Spanish monarchs, who were held up as a sort of scare-crows to bad governments, and were of more use dead than living, had granted no monopoly half so monstrous or half so mischievous as the monopoly of food. This was a job of the landed interest; and he

would repeat, that it was the most gigantic job to be found in the whole history of misrule. It was not possible the Corn Laws should be continued. Both justice and policy required their repeal. He believed that to be the only assembly on the face of the earth in which it was necessary to prove the advantages of cheap food. Their Lordships were sharp-sighted enough on some occasions, and had speedily perceived the necessity of a law to punish those who broke machines. But why were the breakers of machines to be put down? because machines saved labour; all our wealth, all our productive power, depended on the employment of machines: and if they were valuable, how was it that cheap food was an injury? If food was cheap, labour was cheap; but the Corn Laws compelled us to have recourse to more labour to produce food; this must be the case while we were obliged to cultivate bad soils, when we might obtain food from good soils: and the Corn Laws ought to be put down like machine breakers. It was stated by some that the difference of prices was so great upon the Continent, as compared with this country, that ruin must be the consequence of allowing an unrestricted importation to take place. But he would deny the fact. If they could show him that there was a considerable difference in the prices, which he did not believe, then he would say, that in proportion as the landholder gained, the consumer lost, and that by persisting in restrictive measures, in order to keep up the price, they proclaimed their own avarice and injustice. Their Lordships were all aware, that that celebrated voyager, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, on giving an account of that august assembly to the king of Brobdignag, had told him that they were always occupied for the good of the country. Now if, instead of such an account, he had informed him that they were always occupied in contriving to keep up the price of corn, then indeed his Majesty's answer would have

been a just one, when he observed, that we were the most contemptible race of little reptiles, and our rulers the most selfish and unjust. As to the prosperity of the country, he believed the one thing needful with respect to it was a revision of the Corn Laws. Indeed, he felt the conviction of its necessity so strongly, that he felt himself bound to move an amendment, expressive of an opinion to that effect. His Lordship, accordingly, concluded with an amendment, pledging the House to take into consideration, at an early period, the propriety of revising the Corn Laws, as the best means of securing the prosperity of the country.

The Amendment was negatived, and the Address agreed to without a division.

THE CORN LAWS.

(March 3. 1826.)

Lord King rose to present a petition against the most gigantic of all jobs. It came from the working community of Manchester and its neighbourhood, and was signed by 40,000 persons, and would have been signed by 20,000 more, had it not been for the delay and expense of collecting them. He thought that the character of that House would depend on the result of their Lordships' determination respecting the Corn Laws. In coming to this question, their Lordships ought to recollect that the public were very good judges, not only of the value of their decisions, but of the motives of them also. The petitioners stated, that the Corn Laws were made for the benefit of the landlords; but in that House it was always

argued that those laws were established for the benefit of the public; and those who were most forward in maintaining this doctrine, were among the persons who contended for unlimited trade in every other respect. The people, however, were now too well-informed on the subject, and their Lordships must expect to draw very largely on public credulity, if they thought they could make it be believed that those laws were for anybody's benefit but the land-owner's. Some noble Lords, however, objected very much to "little harangues" on corn, and wished to have nothing said on the subject, except in a real debate, in which they might sport all the variety of their ingenuity. These great orators were like those sportsmen who wished to abstain from shooting occasionally in order to have one great shooting day. Others, on the contrary, chose to shoot every day in the year, and he believed that, in the end, they killed more than those who reserved themselves for one great annual battle. When the great debate day did come, he had no doubt that some noble Lords would endeavour to prove that the real interests of the manufacturers and labourers consisted in eating the dearest corn, and in being confined to the narrowest market. To him nothing could be more absurd than this; for when the price of corn was made dear, the labour of those who consumed it must be increased, as they could not get proportionate wages. There could be no greater injustice than this, and he believed nothing was so likely to diffuse angry feelings, and separate the labouring community from the owners of property. He was therefore most anxious that the subject should be gone into without loss of time.

Ordered to lie on the table.

THE CORN LAWS.

(March 9. 1826.)

Lord King said, he had another petition to present against the job of jobs. It came from the carpenters and joiners of London, and was signed by 1,400 persons, who stated, that the law which excluded foreign corn greatly injured them, by the manner in which it affected the remuneration of their labour, and he agreed with them in the opinion. Some people were very fond of high prices, high rents, and high wages. By high prices they alleged that every thing was equalized; but in his opinion this sort of equalization did not produce anything like equity or justice between parties. The great desideratum with the supporters of the Corn Laws was certainly at all times high rents; but how were high rents to be obtained without high prices? The real object, then, was high prices; and high prices were not to be had without the exclusion of foreign corn; but, if you exclude foreign corn, you exclude food. Some people, however, said, that this exclusion of foreign corn created more English food; but it could do so in no other way than by forcing bad land; and if bad land was forced to produce food, it must be at the expense of so much additional labour,—of labour far more than equivalent to the value of the food produced. Still, however, some persons said, "if you alter the Corn Laws you will do no good, because to lower the price of corn will only be to lower the price of labour with it." But this was a very erroneous opinion, as the present state of things compared with that when corn was cheap, would show. The price of labour now afforded the labourer only a bare existence,

whereas, heretofore, he got enough not only for his subsistence but for comforts. It was certainly true that if corn were cheap the money price of labour would fall; but the real remuneration of labour would increase. He should think that abundance and cheapness of food would be regarded as a great blessing to any country, and one which a wise and benevolent legislature would be desirous to confer. This he should expect now, whatever might have been done in those dark times of legislation when Parliament thought fit to declare that paper and gold were of equal value.

Ordered to lie on the table.

THE CORN LAWS.

(March 14. 1826.)

Lord King said, he rose to present a petition against that real dead weight, or job of jobs, the Corn Laws. On this subject he had already had the misfortune to provoke two of his noble friends. One of them had told him that it was very improper to take the House by surprise with arguments which noble Lords were not prepared to answer. On the present occasion, therefore, he should avoid any of those abstruse principles of political economy which had been so much complained of; but would confine himself to history and plain matter of fact. Turning, then, to history, he must remind their Lordships of the period when the corn laws were passed. That event took place in those dark ages of legislation, in those times of ignorance, when it was gravely declared that a one pound note was equal in value to a

sovereign. Then it was, when our political sun was in obscuration, that a law was passed to make corn and bread dear. Tradition said, that after a very expensive war, the landlords objected to pay their share of the expense. They liked the war very well, but they did not like to be called upon when the bill came to be settled. They then took counsel how to avoid paying their part of the bill. Two ways occurred to them of accomplishing that object. The first was by defrauding the public creditor; the second by taxing the consumers of corn. Now it happened, that to the first course the government objected; the public creditor was therefore saved, but the consumer of corn was sacrificed. It appeared that at this time a close alliance had been formed between the government, the landowners, and the clergy. The object of the government was high taxes, the object of the landowners high rents, and the object of the clergy high tithes. Now he believed, that with regard to rents and tithes, the landlords and the clergy were as obdurate as ever; but he was persuaded that the government would break the compact if they could. They would willingly abandon this mode of taxing for one which would work more easily and with better effect. But it was said, how is it possible to obtain high taxes without high prices? To this he would answer, that high taxes could be paid with much greater ease, if the high prices were got rid of; for the Corn Laws formed a grievous addition to the other burthens of the country, and if the public had not to pay so dear for corn, the weight of the other taxes would be more easily borne. This dead weight thrown on the first necessary of life, reminded him of an awkward method which had been resorted to in its production. A practice, it was said, once prevailed in Ireland, of fastening the plough to the horse's tail, and in that way making him drag it

along. Perhaps the noble Earl opposite (Lord Limerick) would stand up in defence of that ancient and venerable practice; but he would advise the noble Earl to consider the difference between a field ploughed by the miserable Irish horse of antiquity, with the plough at his tail, and another ploughed by a well-harnessed and a well-fed horse, who could put his shoulder to the work. If he looked well to this point, he would find that the horse yoked as horses were elsewhere ploughed with great ease, six inches deep, while the jaded animal, with the plough at its tail, could barely scratch the ground. Now, it was precisely the same thing with the Corn Laws. Like the plough at the horse's tail they were a dead weight on the public, and damped the energies of the country. If their Lordships were really desirous that it should be enabled to support a great amount of taxation, they would lose no time in repealing those laws.

THE CORN LAWS.

(March 21. 1826.)

Lord King said he had to present to their Lordships a petition against the Corn Laws from one of the largest parishes in the metropolis. The petitioners stated, that they had confidence in the good intentions of his Majesty's government; he also had confidence in ministers, and he was glad to see that they were likely to receive real support from without; for otherwise they might expect little from within parliament. He sincerely trusted they would not be deterred from proceeding in their course, and that

the public would not slacken their efforts; for unless ministers were supported by petitions, it would be impossible for them to carry their good intentions into effect. In consequence of the part he had taken on this question, a great deal of advice had been offered to him by different persons. Some had requested him to desist, hinting that his speeches were like sermons in Lent, and repeated as often. Others were of opinion that he had a vicious propensity to make corn cheap; and as they thought that a vicious propensity in him, he must suppose that they considered a disposition to make corn dear a virtuous propensity. A third party complained that he treated these worthy Corn Laws like a miscreant at the bar of the Old Bailey, giving them all kinds of bad names. He was blamed for stigmatising them with more aliases than ever was given to a thief on his trial: for he had called them the Corn Laws, alias the bread-tax, alias the dead weight, alias the landlords' tax, and worst of all, alias the job of jobs. Now as so much kindness had been shown to him in the way of advice, he wished to give the House some good advice in return. In the first place, he would beg of noble Lords to reflect what the situation of the country would be if the price of corn were to rise considerably? That such an event might happen was no vain fear. He could state it as matter of fact, that there was at this time less corn than usual in granaries in the country; that the markets were less crowded with supplies; and that in the warehouses there was less corn than had ever been known at any former period. Now he would seriously ask the House to consider what the state of things would be if corn were to rise considerably before harvest? By such a rise, this country would be thrown into a state of much greater difficulty than it experienced in 1796, 1797, and 1801, because the population was

now much greater than at that time; and because there had been for a long time no importation from abroad. Besides, he believed that a sufficient supply could not be obtained at once by importation; for he understood that it would appear at once from the report which the noble Lord opposite had promised to lay on the table, that the state of the foreign markets did not hold out much expectation of large importations, and at least that they could not be looked to for any sudden supply to a large extent. But it was above all to be recollected, that according to the present law, our ports could not be opened, and no foreign corn could be admitted until the price rose in this country to 80*s.*,—to an amount which, in the present state of things, would be a starving price, indicative of a period of famine. He had lately seen a report made to the French minister of the interior, in which the average price of corn in different countries was stated. The price was given in francs; but the proportion showed the difference in several parts of Europe. According to this statement, the price in England, which was 27f. 32c., was higher than in any other country. At Amsterdam, the average was 12f. 32c. In France it was higher; the average there being nearly 16f. The only place in Europe in which the price of corn approached the height at which it stood in England, was Spain, under the misgovernment of Ferdinand. Thus their Lordships divided between them and that despot the disgrace of making corn dearer in England and in Spain than in any other country of Europe. How was this disgrace to be wiped off, and the evil of high prices to be corrected? The only resource their Lordships had for accomplishing that object, was a revision of the Corn Laws. That, however, he believed could not be done until the noble Earl opposite was resolved to clear away all the lumber and

cobwebs which embarrassed and darkened the cabinet, until he dismissed all useless members to go if they liked to King Ferdinand, whose ministers they were well fitted to be. If the noble Earl would take this advice, he would, when he came to the task of revision, find that house as plastic as a piece of potter's clay. But if he did not choose to do this, there was another way in which the business might be managed. When the usual circular at the commencement of next session came to be written, the noble Earl had better address his old friends in these terms: — "My Lord, Parliament is to meet for the despatch of very important business on the 3d of February next, when your Lordship's absence is most earnestly requested." All that was needful, was to get his old friends to stay away. This was his advice to the noble Earl; but he had said that he would give advice to the House, and he would now give it one word. His advice to them was simply "Do justice." What right had that House, or any legislative assembly, to devise means to raise the price of food? It would be a breach of trust if it could be supposed that so monstrous a proposition was acted upon by any parties in parliament, as to make corn dear for their own advantage. Such a course, if persisted in, was calculated to bring on one of those political convulsions, in which a lawless power might step in, as was once done in another place, and say to one, "You are an extortioner," to another "You are a tithe-monger. Get you gone, and give place to honester men."

THE CORN LAWS.

(April 14. 1826.)

Lord King said, he held in his hand a petition signed by several thousands of the population of Preston and its neighbourhood. It came from a district which was populous, but grievously oppressed by the corn laws, that great dead weight which bore down all classes, one excepted. The petition therefore was one against pauperism and famine ; against the pauperism price of corn, which was 60*s.* the quarter; and against the famine price which it reached when it got to 70*s.* and upwards; and this famine price he fully expected corn would this year reach. This question, fairly stated, lay between the interests of the landlords on one side, and the prosperity of the country on the other. On the one side was power, on the other reason and justice ; but the latter, he was sure, would triumph if the good intentions of the noble Lord on the other side were not fatally counteracted, when he came to take up this question seriously, as it was hoped he soon would do. When the price of corn and labour in France and Germany was less than one half of the price in this country, it was impossible to prevent our manufacturers from removing to those countries. By what magic could our manufacturers be prevented from being transferred to places where there was security for property, and where the profits of industry would be great in proportion as wages were lower? What right had the members of the legislature to persist, in maintaining a system of laws which must condemn this country to all the miseries inseparable from a declining state of society.

THE CORN LAWS. — DEBATE ON LORD MALMESBURY'S MOTION.

(May 11. 1826.)

Lord King, with reference to the mischief which it had been said opinions expressed in that House were calculated to create, remarked that the law was the source of mischief. The noble Earl opposite might do his worst, and he himself might do his worst, but no mischief would be the consequence; it was the law itself, the existing Corn Laws, that produced the mischief. The present measure was a very convenient way of getting rid of those laws indirectly; it was a dexterous mode of catching the simple politicians on the opposite side of the House; though, he confessed, it argued some weakness to be so caught. In the face of the measure now introduced, the noble Earl opposite still persisted that there was to be no alteration of the Corn Laws. How this measure would be received on the ministerial side of the House he could not tell, but he believed this Treasury measure had not been received so cordially on that side as was expected. He did not wish to detract from the merit of the noble Lords opposite. He believed the members of his Majesty's cabinet were possessed of great experience, and understood pretty well the nature and composition of noble Lords. Still, however, he thought that as a skilful practitioner, who understood the constitution of his patient, when he altered his diet, would furnish something like a reason for it; so his Majesty's ministers ought to satisfy their patients, as to the change they made in their treatment. The noble Earl Malmesbury*, who opened the debate that evening,

* The Earl of Malmesbury's Resolution was, that this House is most anxious to contribute all in its power to the relief of the suffering

wished for an inquiry, but an inquiry would last for a year. The House knew enough of inquiries from one which had taken place elsewhere. And who were the persons who stood up for inquiry? The friends of the Corn Laws. He thought that after the changes which had taken place during eleven years, after the alteration in the currency, and other material changes, it was mere drivelling to say that the Corn Laws required no change. Eleven years was about the average duration of a Chancery suit; he believed there had been a kind of amicable Chancery suit on this question between the Chancery and the Treasury; and the noble Secretary for the Colonies, certainly not the most liberal part of the Cabinet, had been put forward in defence of the present measure. The freedom of the corn trade was necessary to the prosperity of our manufactures. Every quarter of corn imported from abroad purchased British manufactures of equal value. Unless foreign corn was admitted into this country, our own commodities could not be purchased by foreigners. The real question was, whether a check was to be imposed upon the introduction of raw produce into the country: at present, corn was one third dearer here than it was on the Continent; but, if it were three times dearer, then the Corn Laws would appear monstrous; the question was, therefore, one only of degree. There was no period during which the country was in a state of greater prosperity, both commercial and agricultural, than one which was a time of unrestricted importation of corn — from 1782 to 1792. When he looked for the causes of the present distress, he would say they were the Corn Laws. All writers agreed that when raw produce was high, wages would be high, profits low, and the rate of interest low. If that were the case,

classes of the community; but that it is not expedient to alter or suspend the existing Corn Laws without an inquiry, &c.

he was right in attributing the present distress to the Corn Laws. As a friend, therefore, to the alteration of those laws he would resist the noble Earl's motion, because he could have the conclusion he wished for come to a year sooner. As to consistency, he was not concerned about others, but he did not wish for a famine price, even at the loss of that precious consistency. But it was asked, why was there now any danger of a famine price, since corn was lower this year than it was during the last? But compare it with the relative prices of other articles in the last year, and it would be found, in fact, much higher. He thought there could be no chance of a steady system, without an alteration in the Corn Laws, and he would, therefore, oppose the original motion.

THE CORN LAWS.

(May 23. 1826.)

Lord King said, he would do the noble Earl, at the head of the government, the justice to say that that noble Earl had made a stout defence in a bad cause. He had no doubt that that noble Earl, with many others, would, in the next year, make a defence in the last ditch; but he trusted that such opposition would not induce Parliament to stand in the gap between prosperity and a starving population. He congratulated the noble Earl upon his success over his domestic enemies; and the noble Earl having set his house in order, might next year, with the certainty of success, proceed to the discussion of the Corn Laws. There were only two ways in which the proposed relief could be afforded to the manufacturing

population. One was by passing the bill now before their Lordships; and the other by his Majesty's ministers acting upon their own responsibility, in case of emergency. He preferred the mode adopted by his Majesty's ministers, and he did so because it held out to the population the positive assurance that government would, if necessary, give them relief; whereas, if such a measure had not been brought forward, the manufacturing population would have been left in doubt as to the intentions of government. He knew many noble Lords who were averse to free trade, — many who were averse to free air (of which there was not then much in that House), — and many who were averse to free conscience. He was a friend both to free air and to free trade. He also looked forward to a better state of things, when men would enjoy free conscience. Many noble Lords were averse to free trade; and at the close of the last war, propositions had been made to exclude all raw produce. One said, exclude butter; another said, exclude corn; another said, exclude wool; — that was the *codex agrestis* of the honourable members for Somerset and Suffolk, who joined in the cry, that this country ought to be a nation of sellers, and not a nation of buyers; but those who maintained that doctrine, did not state how a nation could sell, without buying something in return from the nations to which they sold. A question had been asked, whether this country could produce sufficient corn for its own consumption. No doubt this country could. But then another question arose, — at what price could we produce that corn? How much labour and capital would be lost in producing this corn? When the good corn-land should be exhausted, bad land must be brought into cultivation, at a great sacrifice of capital and labour. A noble Earl had said, that he wished to renounce all paradoxes in the discussion

of this question; but that noble Earl immediately afterwards had said, that a low price of corn would be productive of general distress. That statement appeared to him paradoxical. He could not see how a low price of corn could be productive of distress to the consumer. On the contrary, he thought that excluding foreign corn, and thereby compelling the consumer to pay a higher price than he could procure foreign corn for, was a tax upon his labour. They were told, that it would be a great misfortune to be dependent upon foreign supplies. He was satisfied that those who made those statements were actuated solely by a wish for the prosperity of the consumer, uninfluenced by any personal considerations. Those persons said — "Oh, if you allow foreign supplies, we must live like Dutchmen, dependent upon the other nations, who might, if they pleased, combine, and stop the supplies." In answer to that argument, he would refer their Lordships to the period when Napoleon's power was at its height, and when he had opportunities (such as would probably never again exist) of injuring this country. What was the fact then? Foreign corn was supplied to this country upon paying a good price. Whilst it was the interest of the nations of Europe to sell their produce, there was not the most distant chance of a combination. One noble Lord had urged, as an argument against this measure, that the landowners paid the tithes; but he begged leave to inform the noble Lord, that the tithe was as much paid by the consumer, as if the clergyman, after the loaf was purchased at the baker's shop, were to cut off one-tenth part of it. He liked this bill, because it made an inroad upon the Corn Laws. He was glad to get at them in any way, or by any means; and he trusted that next year the call of the country for an alteration in those laws would be irresistible.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION.

(November 21. 1826.)

Lord King rose to assure their Lordships that he had no objection either to the address proposed by the noble Earl, or to the speech which his Majesty had delivered that day from the throne. All the fault which he had to find was, that the speech did not go far enough, that it omitted the most material occurrences. As far as it went, it was good enough; but it did not say enough, — it did not describe the real state of the country, and it was, therefore, his intention to move an amendment. Their Lordships had been told, both in the speech from the throne, and in the speech of the noble seconder, a great deal about the distress which had prevailed; and this was repeated in the proposed address, so that it was a seven times repeated tale. To speak of that deep distress in such a manner was to no purpose. It was not a bit more manly or more useful than the proclamation published yearly at every assize town, in the name of his Majesty George IV. Talking of the distress did no more to relieve it than that proclamation could do. He would rather see some remedial measures; — a determination to reduce the expenditure of the country — a determination to diminish the army, to diminish the national burthens, and to get rid of the Corn Laws. It was all *vox et præterea nihil*, — mere opiates to lull them asleep; and what Parliament wanted was, not opiates, but something to rouse it to examine the state of the country. The beginning of a new Parliament was a favourable opportunity to revise their past Acts, to repent their manifold sins and transgressions, and to

resolve to lead a new life. The last Parliament had done something good; but it might have done more, if they had adopted the Corn Bill of the noble Earl opposite, and the economy recommended by that side of the House. That Parliament did many things it ought not to have done, and it left undone many things it ought to have done. That Parliament voted a profligate expenditure, and for that he found fault with it. It was also an army-voting Parliament, and for that he condemned it. It was a palace-voting Parliament, and he hoped this would not be a palace-voting Parliament. That Parliament did many incorrect and many foolish things; but the worst and most foolish thing it did was that relative to the dead weight, which surpassed in mystery the mystery of transubstantiation. The Catholics were often derided in that House for their absurd faith; but they might now retort on the Protestant Chancellor of the Exchequer of that day, who had proposed the extraordinary mystery of the dead weight, and persuaded Parliament to agree to his proposition. He hoped that this mystery would be got rid of on the first opportunity. It would be no great exertion of the present Parliament to grant ministers that indemnity they asked for; namely, allowing the importation of that grain which had been described as food for man in Scotland, and for horses in England, and the importation of other corn that was fit to be eaten by other animals. But he hoped the present Parliament would do more than this. Parliament was, however, the slowest learner, the most backward and perverse scholar he ever knew. It took ten years to teach it some few of the truths of political economy, of which some gentlemen even yet entertained so much dread. For two years it was drilled into, and then seemed scarcely to comprehend, the doctrine of transition from war to peace, which was frequently and forcibly in-

culcated on it, that it might not insist on reducing the expenditure, and that it might not suppose excessive taxation was the cause of the distress at that time. A whole year and more it was taught without ever learning, he believed, the great truth of over-production. For a long time it listened with surprise to the great merit of digging holes and filling them up again, and then again digging holes and then refilling them. But the most difficult lesson of all was the Canada Corn Bill, the doctrines of which many persons still refused to assent to. Then there was that other Corn Bill, which the other Parliament had never comprehended, and which he hoped this Parliament would. Much was said about the bad system of Eton and Westminster, where people passed ten years of their lives learning two languages; but these two languages were effectually taught: the boys did not learn much, but they did learn to read an old song. Homer and Virgil were good old songs. But the Parliament, with all the teaching it got, did not learn an old song. Their Lordships had heard what the last Parliament had done, and he would now turn to what ministers were doing. They were learning, too; they were taking lessons of the noble and learned Lord on the woolsack, and had not done anything. They were taking a lesson of doubting and pausing. If, in riding through the country, one saw an estate falling to ruin, the fences broken down, the land overrun with weeds, the house falling to decay, there was hardly any occasion to ask the reason; that estate was in Chancery. In like manner, when the country was in a state of distress, that was because the ministers were doubting and pausing. An estate was ruined because it was in Chancery [" That was when Lord King was Chancellor," from the Lord Chancellor; *hear*, and *a laugh*], and the country was involved in distress because ministers were doubting. If our in-

telligent artisans were emigrating, and carrying with them that knowledge which would establish manufactures in other countries, it was because ministers were pausing. If capital was driven out of the country—if profits were low—if our manufacturers could no longer compete with those of other countries,—it was also because ministers were doubting and pausing. They were the most extraordinary doubters and pausers, excepting Lord Chancellors, whether Lord Chancellor King or Lord Chancellor Eldon, he had ever witnessed. He must say, however, in favour of the noble Earl, that his delays only ruined the suitors in his court, while nothing less than the ruin of the country was caused by the doubts and pausings of ministers. It was yet doubtful whether the Corn Bill was to be a Cabinet question or not; and, like the Catholic question, he believed it was not, because no measure of importance was made a Cabinet question. The famous Corn Bill of 1815 was not a Cabinet measure; it was got up by Irish jobbers, well seconded, indeed, by the jobbers both of England and Scotland. They fixed the importation price at 80*s*., at which sum they in their great mercy would allow the people to get bread. They had not, indeed, always obtained this sum, but they intended to wring it from the people. If Parliament wished to see in what light its conduct was received, let members look at the different public meetings. Their Lordships and the other House of Parliament were considered as a body of landlords, who had the power to make what laws they pleased, and made use of that power to levy a tax on the people. Of the other House it was said, that the country gentlemen had entered into an implied contract with ministers to support extravagant establishments, if ministers would secure them high prices. It was in this manner the Parliament was spoken and thought of in the country. In this way was the extraordinary

expenditure of the government accounted for. The country gentlemen sanctioned a taxation of upwards of 50,000,000*l.* a-year. This was the cause why, in the twelfth year of peace, there was no reduction of the national debt, and why the peace, or rather war establishments, still cost upwards of 20,000,000*l.* per annum. It seemed as if the object of government was to try, by experiment, not how cheaply, but how dearly and costly government could be carried on. We enjoyed the bad pre-eminence of being the most taxed people, and having the most expensive government in the world. His Majesty, though it was so generally allowed that this enormous taxation was a cause of distress, said nothing in his speech about reducing it. The estimates were to be framed with a consideration to the exigencies of the public service, but not with any regard to the distress of the people. Under this view of the matter, he had drawn up an amendment, which he should move should be added to the address.—His Lordship sat down with moving that the following amendment be added to the address: —

"We trust that a steady adherence to just and liberal principles of policy will prevent a repetition of those distresses, which in the course of the last ten years have repeatedly and severely afflicted all classes of your Majesty's subjects.

"We have observed with the utmost anxiety those vicissitudes in the state and condition of the landed, commercial, and manufacturing interests—those alternate seasons of prosperity and adversity, of a short and fallacious prosperity followed by wide-spread calamity and ruin, so unusual and so unnatural in a period of profound peace. We cannot avoid comparing the condition of all the great leading interests of the country during the last ten years of peace, and contrasting it with the uninterrupted prosperity and com-

fort enjoyed by all classes of our fellow-subjects during the ten years which followed the conclusion of the American war. At that period, the civil and military establishments were fixed on the most economical scale of expense; the advantages of our insular situation were duly appreciated; a state of peace was then a state also of repose from unnecessary taxation; the wise economy which afforded ease to the subject prepared at the same time for the government the means of those astonishing exertions which were called forth in the course of the last war. At the present time, with a taxation exceeding 50,000,000*l.*, little, if any, progress has been made in the reduction of the national debt; and, with a peace establishment of 20,000,000*l.*, nearly quadruple that of the former peace, we fear that, from the state of our finances, this kingdom is very ill prepared to resist the aggressions of foreign states.

"During the former peace, the prohibitory system did not apply in practice to this most important article of produce — to the trade in corn. The ports of Great Britain were then constantly open to the admission of foreign wheat at a low and almost nominal duty: and at no period of our history did the landed interest, as well as the whole community, enjoy greater security and prosperity.

"The existing laws, which prohibit the importation of foreign corn, except when the price of grain shall have risen to an extravagant height in the home market, are found to be highly detrimental to the public prosperity; they cause an unnecessary waste of labour in the cultivation of poor lands, they enhance the cost of food, they diminish the profits of stock, they have a strong tendency to drive capital abroad, they are most injurious to trade by limiting the beneficial exchange of foreign raw produce with the manufactured produce of British industry, they encourage

the establishment of rival manufactures in foreign countries, and, lastly, they are unjust inasmuch as they prevent the people from obtaining a supply of the first necessary of life at the cheapest market.

"During the former peace, and until the unfortunate era of 1797, the currency of the country was in a fixed and perfect state, being composed in a large proportion of the lawful gold coin of the realm, in its nature not liable to excessive issues and sudden contractions. We have since endured all the evils arising from a large, and in many instances, from an insecure circulation of paper, creating at one time by an undue extension an artificial and delusive prosperity, and producing at another time most sudden and severe reverses, destructive alike to property and industry.

"In the course of ten years of uninterrupted peace, we have observed with the utmost pain the frequent recurrence of a state of calamity and ruin, unexampled in the midst of war, and feel convinced that the only substantial security for the future will be found in reducing and retrenching the public expenditure, in the full and entire restoration of a secure currency, by the removal of all traces of those innovations in our monetary system made in 1797, together with such additional securities as may be necessary to place all that part of the currency consisting of the promissory notes of private bankers on a solid foundation, and, above all, in a repeal of the Corn Laws, and in the abolition of all that is still suffered to remain of that impolitic prohibitory system, which sacrifices the interests of the many to the few, and favours the producers at the expense of the great body of consumers, who are the community at large."

The Amendment was put and negatived.

IRISH VESTRIES.

(March 5. 1827.)

Lord King said, he had a petition entrusted to him by the Catholics of Ireland; and, as it related to the state in which they were placed with respect to the Church of Ireland, he had been unwilling to present it before he saw an Irish prelate in the House. The petition complained of the exactions which were practised on the property of the Catholics at the will and pleasure of Protestants, for Protestant purposes, and with very little check given to them by those who had the power to control such proceedings. The petition stated the grievances the Catholic suffered from being obliged to pay sums of money, levied by vestries, where Protestants voted away the money, nineteen-twentieths of which were paid by Catholics; Catholics being excluded by law from voting at vestries on a great many occasions. The petition stated, that the Church of Ireland was the richest primeval Christian Church in the world; the people the poorest and most wretched in any country. The number that professed the faith of the Established Church was comparatively the smallest in any country in the world which was burthened with an Established Church. The petition went on to state the injustice of persons being allowed to tax others, while the classes who paid the money had no control whatsoever over them. He was aware of an act being passed, professing to be for the relief of the Roman Catholics as assessed by Protestant vestries. That act, however, so far from being a relief, was an aggravation of the evil. Whether this was true or not he could not say; but that was the opinion of those who

stated that they were aggrieved. Certainly, Catholics were, in a great many cases, excluded from being present at vestries. It was true that they had a right of appeal; but, coupled with a condition which few Catholics, he was afraid, were enabled to comply with, namely, sureties of 100*l.* each, to answer any costs that might be given against the appellant. In order that their Lordships might see that the petitioners did not complain without reason, he would read to them some of the exactions practised on the Catholics, which would appear quite incredible, had they not been sanctioned by the authority of a Parliamentary return. He thought their Lordships would be astonished at some of the items. In the parish of St. Thomas, Dublin, at a vestry composed of Protestants, voting away money that was paid by the Catholics, the following were charges year after year, that were exacted from the Catholics:—for wine to the sacrament 28*l.*, for a sextoness 30*l.*, for a sexton 30*l.*, for a beadle 20*l.* There was besides an extraordinary compensation made to the Rev. Mr. Field, and the Rev. Mr. Copland, for attending early service, of 50*l.* each. Two women were also paid for attending early service; so that it would appear that the vestry was first of all forced to pay the preachers for their attendance, and afterwards to buy a congregation to hear them. The two women had a yearly stipend allowed them for attending, as well as the clergyman, and thus their Lordships might go on year after year, for as sure as the same sum was charged for the clergyman attending, so sure were the two old women paid for their attendance. And it was the same with the sacramental wine. Every year 28*l.* was charged for that article; it would seem, therefore, that there was no falling off in the number of the communicants. He would now take another parish. In that parish he found that 150*l.* was charged for

compensation for early service; there was paid to the organist 70*l.*; to Margaret Ryan, gallery-keeper, 20*l.*; to assistant gallery-keeper, 20*l.*; to the vestry-keeper, 20*l.*; to the organ-blower, 20*l.*; for sacramental wine, 20*l.* In another parish, 59*l.* 11*s.* 8*d.* was charged for the sacramental wine: He thought such a charge quite enormous. In Dublin, the diocese was charged with the expense of repairing the cathedral. In England, it was both the law and the practice to pay for the repairs of the cathedral out of the property of the cathedral. But in Ireland the cathedrals were thrown upon the parish. In the diocese of Waterford, in the Union of Trinity, there was this item: — for repairing the roof of the cathedral, 220*l.*, levied by the vestry and paid for by the Catholics. He would now go to another cathedral, that of Lismore: — in 1812, 95*l.* was paid for repairing the cathedral gates; in 1813, 100*l.*; in 1814, 122*l.* 8*s.* 1*d.*; in 1815, 51*l.*; in 1816, 100*l.*; and in the year 1817, 20*l.* What did their Lordships think the expense of repairing these gates amounted to? — to a sum of no less than 488*l.* Michael Angelo had said that the gates of a celebrated Church in Florence were so beautiful, that they were fit to be the gates of Paradise. He did not know whether the gates of Lismore cathedral were equal to those famous gates in Florence, but he thought it was the highest price ever paid for gates in the world. These expenses were paid for by the parish, nineteen-twentieths of which were composed of Catholics. He would now take another diocese, that of Cork: here the items were as follows: — paid to the parish clerk, 20*l.*; for singing anthems, 34*l.* 2*s.*; for instructing the boys, 22*l.*; for the sacramental wine, 22*l.*; and to parish clerk for evening attendance, 34*l.*, as if he had not enough already; for washing the church linen, 9*l.* 2*s.*; for candles for the church, 30*l.* All this sounded most extraordinary to English ears.

In the diocese of Elfin, there was paid for repairs done by order of the bishop, 220*l.*; cash paid to the bishop for outlay by him, two sums of 50*l.* and one of 33*l.* From these charges it appeared to him, that the vestries imitated a certain assembly, which never made the expenses it had to vote as small, but as great as possible. The vestries were to be sure but a very humble imitation. A person once went into that assembly, and he thought it a very strange place, in which very strange things were done. One man handed up a paper, and mumbled a few unintelligible words over it, which he afterwards found to be a vote of some millions. So a Protestant carpenter hands up to a Protestant mason an estimate of necessary repairs, and they get a very good job between them, and it turns out that there is a very large sum to be paid. One reason that was given why so few Catholics attended the vestries, was the general satisfaction their proceedings had given. How far that was the case would appear from the opinion of those who were interested in the matter, who stated that a small proportion of the parish, an interested minority, was enabled to tax, to a great amount, the majority who were composed of Catholics. It was most unconstitutional to take money from a man without his own consent. It was nothing less than downright robbery. That, however, was but a part of the mischief. If a man appealed to the sessions he must do two things — he must employ a good practical lawyer, and he must find two sureties bound in 100*l.* each to answer for the costs.—The noble Lord moved that the petition be read.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS.

(March 28. 1827.)

Lord King, in presenting a petition from the Catholics of Ireland, relative to the test oaths, said, that the petitioners complained, and he thought most justly, of the cruel slanders cast upon them and upon their faith, by that law which requires every person called upon to take a seat in the legislature, or to perform the duties of a public office, to take certain oaths, by which every judge, bishop, or sheriff, was obliged to declare the Catholic religion as an execrable superstition, and the Catholics themselves to be base idolaters. This proceeding the petitioners considered most unjustifiable, and he entirely concurred with them in the opinion. Many petitions had been presented to their Lordships against these calumniated Catholics by the Right Reverend Bench, and great numbers had also been presented from bodies of the clergy, who evinced any thing but what was likely to create among their fellow-Christians charity, harmony, and good will. He had lately read an extract from a German paper, and he could not help contrasting the conduct of our clergy with that of the King of Prussia, who had expressed his approbation of the manner in which a Catholic priest and a Lutheran parson had exerted themselves in bringing about harmony and union between parties not professing the same faith. He could not help exclaiming on the occasion —" Oh, happy people, and happy country! where nothing is to be gained by the profession of bigotry and intolerance — where you are not called upon to sacrifice every other consideration, to please the advocates of Protestant ascendency; and where the road to power

is not through the presentation of pestilential petitions from Protestant parsons, nor from the scribbling of pamphlets still more pestilential, to be afterwards preached as sermons in a chapel at no great distance from that House, in order to tickle the noble and learned Lord who sat not far from him." In Prussia there were no attempts to make proselytes by mischievous and mistaken zealots or uncandid and aspiring politicians—men who, to suit their own views, declare a crusade against the Catholics, and assert the finger of God to be visible in every movement. Enthusiasts in religion might think, and artful politicians might be ready to say, whether they thought it or not, that the Almighty favoured their enterprise; but he would tell these zealots and interested enthusiasts, that unless the modern crusaders had more inspiration, as well as more success, than the old hermit and his adherents, there was but little probability of their converting the "benighted people of Ireland." It had been happily observed in one of the daily journals, that it was as feasible to bring about such an event, the grand consummation of converting "the benighted people of Ireland," as it was to attempt to "bottle off the Atlantic Ocean." But against those Protestant Jesuits—those never-ceasing conversionists, the very best authority would be found in a charge delivered by the present Archbishop of Cashel, who stated it to be his opinion, that in attempting to proselytize, it was advisable that they should look not merely to the probability of success, but to something more, namely, that such attempt might be fraught with danger to Christianity itself. He had heard of great danger to our finances by a few pepper-corns being brought into the Exchequer at the expense of millions; so there might be imminent danger by a few converts being brought into the Church at the expense of the religion of the country.

However, some political priests cried, "Woe be to those who interfere with the blessed work of this new reformation!" But those who cried "woe, woe," were ready to inflict woe upon others, while they were ready to undergo martyrdom; but, very fortunately for themselves, it was only the martyrdom of promotion.

THE CORN LAWS.

(April 11. 1827.)

Lord King said, he had a petition to present to the House, which was very numerously signed, and which came from a part of the country which was at present extremely distressed—from Oldham, in the county of Lancaster. He was afraid that this petition could not meet with attention from their Lordships, as it came from the lower orders, who, he knew, were in some quarters considered not very much worth attention. The petition came from persons greatly interested — the consumers of corn — and was to be delivered to an assembly very disinterested and withal very enlightened. The petitioners prayed for a complete repeal of the Corn Laws, and hoped that their Lordships would come to a determination to make the currency of the country a metallic one. In both those particulars he perfectly agreed with the petition. He believed that the paper system had been the cause of the distress which the country had experienced, and under which it was still suffering. There had been at one time to be found in this country, ministers so besotted, as to maintain that paper and gold in value were one and the same thing. They contended

for transubstantiation. They said that the real presence of the gold existed in the pound note, and to the thirty-nine articles had added that fortieth article of state faith. It was another supposition of another statesman, that if every person in the world went to bed over night, and awoke in the morning finding a guinea in his pocket, no person would be the better for it. It was, however, unfortunately the case, that the people always awoke in the morning and found nothing in their pockets, as the measures of their Lordships had taken every farthing away from them. Their Lordships thought that a paper system was a very good thing to keep up high prices and high taxes; but they found that high prices were not to be maintained or high taxes to be paid under a specie system; and the ministers, therefore, came in with a Corn Bill, which they thought would enable the landlords to pay with increased facility. The present petitioners complained of the attempt to make a privileged order in this country, an order privileged to tax the rest of the community solely for their own benefit. He did not know what to think of the folly of the nineteenth century, in which an attempt was made, when the example of the French revolution was before the eyes of the world, to give new privileges and new rights to one certain class. The French noblesse had defended only old abuses and old rights; in this country new abuses and new rights were contended for. The French noblesse thought and acted upon the opinion, that the lower orders were made for the sole purpose of being worked and taxed for the benefit of their betters; and the nobles and gentry of this country appeared to think that the lower orders were made only to starve for their advantage. But nobles, and he was apprehensive, princes also, were rather an indocile race, and had gained but very little in point of wisdom or knowledge, from the

example of the French revolution. The only country in Europe where corn was as dear as it was in this country, was the country of King Ferdinand, and it was to be presumed that he too had his Corn Laws for the purpose of keeping up prices. Ferdinand was, indeed, "every inch a king;" and if from any pressure of circumstances, he found it necessary to alter his administration and change his government, what did he do? Why, he naturally applied to the slyest Jesuit in his dominions, the keeper of his conscience, who advised him to make a government exactly upon the same principles as the old one was formed, so that the people never gained a single step. Ferdinand, it was said, was a very frivolous-minded king, very much pleased with petticoats and uniforms. He was, what Cardinal Wolsey had said of his master, "truly royal-minded." He liked to indulge in his little resentments, and the keeper of his conscience liked to indulge in his little resentments also; so that between them the country was suffering, in order to continue the same person in the office of keeper of the conscience. He should now present the petition, which prayed for reform in Parliament, retrenchment in all expenses, and a total repeal of the Corn Laws.

NEW ADMINISTRATION.

(May 4. 1827.)

Lord King stated, that allusion having been made to a building, he would give an explanation of the word rubbish. Any person who was practically acquainted with building houses must know, that what was sent away from the building was the rubbish. The noble Marquis seemed to have a mist before his eyes when he wished to see an end of the present government. The noble Marquis thought that it could not stand; but he was convinced that it would stand, in spite of all the efforts that might be made to the contrary. The noble Marquis had stated, that the architect found great difficulty in making a foundation, but he thought that the present building with the scaffolding before it was much more ornamental and more useful than the old building. As the noble Marquis was a general, he would remind him of the answer given by a French general to a German officer, who, after drawing out his battalions, offered to fight the Frenchman. The French general said, that it was his plan never to fight but when it pleased himself; so that the noble Lord need not feel surprised if those persons whom he had been addressing should act directly contrary to his advice.

ADDRESS ON THE KING'S SPEECH.

(January 29. 1828.)

Lord King said, that before their Lordships separated he wished to offer a word or two on a very homely subject, of which he was sorry to see there was no mention either in the speech from the throne, or in the address, though it had occupied no inconsiderable portion of their Lordships' time during the last session. He meant the Corn Laws. Now that subject appeared to him to be a more difficult subject for the administration even than the Battle of Navarino. It would be a grievous question to any administration, and it would not be less so to the present, seeing that there were in it two or three avowed friends, two or three decided enemies, and, what was perhaps more dangerous than all, two or three concealed ennemies to the Corn Laws. As there were in the present administration some persons who had been in the last administration, and in the administration before the last, and who, most probably, would also be found in the next administration, it was to be hoped that while they were busy in making terms, and no doubt good terms for themselves, they had not forgotten to make equally good terms for their own principles of free trade, and for a new Corn Law. He would, however, ask what security the country had upon the point? It was said that the country has the same President of the Board of Trade that it had. Now he thought that the country would have a much better security, if the noble Duke at the head of the government, who had the whole substantial power,—who had not only the common and ordinary powers of prime minister,

but had concentrated in himself the civil and military power,—was known to entertain views favourable to free trade, and to the subject to which he alluded; but when he recollected the noble Duke's conduct last year, he thought it a most inadequate security merely to have the continuance of the same person who for a few months had occupied the place of President of the Board of Trade. The country had been told that it had obtained security that the foreign policy of the last administration would not be departed from, seeing that it had the same foreign secretary still in office. Now he considered that security not a whit better than the security they had obtained on the other question: he believed that both those personages were mere satellites of the person at the head of the government, and must necessarily be drawn into his vortex. The old saying that "there was a power behind the throne greater than the throne itself," seemed to be totally reversed, for there seemed to be a power before the throne more formidable than the throne itself. He should be happy if the securities turned out better than he expected. He should be delighted to give his support to any measures of free trade which it was said certain persons had secured, and he should be greatly disappointed if they were not carried into effect.

SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

(March 18. 1828.)

Lord King said it was with great satisfaction that he saw so large an assembly of reverend Prelates, as he wished to draw their attention to a subject which was well worthy of it. He had to present a petition from a clergyman who had been officiating in the colonies

of North America, against any further grant of public money to the Society incorporated for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts. The petitioner objected to any further grant, on the ground of the inefficacy of that Society, of the ignorance of the persons who directed the distribution of its funds, and likewise upon the grounds of the existence of considerable abuse in the distribution of those funds. He believed the petitioner to be a person against whose moral character nothing could be urged. The petitioner stated that an offer of 50*l.* and after of 100*l.*, had been made to him by a person from the Society, to induce him not to bring the subject forward. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was incorporated in 1701, and had existed for more than a century upon voluntary subscriptions and donations. In 1813 or 1814, first began grants of money from the public to the Society. From that time they had gone on gradually increasing, until they had reached the sum of 16,180*l.*, as appeared from the estimates of the present year. He had reason to think too, that the Society now called for a good deal more, from the report which they had published, and from the last sermon which had been preached on its account. The Society had found out that government was a good milch cow. Their Lordships had all heard of this Society, but very few knew the purposes for which it was originally formed. The object of it at the time it was first incorporated, was to form a society for the purpose of providing learned and orthodox clergymen for the administration of God's word and sacraments in the North American colonies, where, for the lack of spirit, the King's subjects were abandoned to infidelity, atheism, popery, superstition and idolatry. In those colonies, the great majority of the inhabitants were not of the Church of England, but Presbyterians, Baptists, and other persuasions; yet the funds of the

Society derived from the public were solely devoted to the maintenance of Church of England clergymen. The Society stated their object to be the maintenance of learned and orthodox clergymen. Did they then mean to say that Presbyterians were not orthodox? The government had, however, given salaries to Presbyterians, yet the Society confined their funds strictly to the maintenance of clergymen of the Church of England, in those colonies where the majority of the inhabitants were not of that persuasion. This he asserted was not a fair distribution of the funds. Was it proper that money should be taken from the public for the maintenance of an establishment which did not suit the population of the country? Having stated the original objects for which the Society had been formed, he would call to their Lordships' recollection one material alteration which had taken place since its institution. In 1792 or 1793, when the bill for settling Canada passed the Parliament, one tenth part of the lands was set apart for the maintenance of the Protestant clergy. An attempt had lately been made exclusively to appropriate that grant to the benefit of the episcopal clergy. That attempt had been resisted, and he hoped successfully; for a more narrow interpretation could not be given to that law, than by appropriating exclusively to the Church of England that which was given for the maintenance of the Protestant clergy of all denominations, whether Epispocal, Presbyterian, Baptist, or any other persuasion. The Church of England establishment, he was sorry to say, when carried out across the Atlantic, exported with it the original sins which beset it in this country; namely, an useless expense, pluralities, and non-residence. In the colony of Nova Scotia, one clergyman was archdeacon of the rectory of St. Paul's, with an income of 800*l.* per annum, ecclesiastical commissioner, with a salary of 300*l.* per annum, and he received from the Society for the Propagation of the

Gospel 200*l.* yearly as a missionary. That was what he called being a pluralist, and this person was the proto-pluralist of the North American colonies. The first person who united in his person those three offices, was Bishop Inglis, Bishop of Nova Scotia, who, he thought, resembled very much a certain minister of state in this country, who some years ago united in his person the offices of the President of the Board of Control, the Treasurer of the Navy, and Keeper of the Privy Seal of Scotland. Bishop Inglis might very properly be described as the ecclesiastical Dundas of the colonies. To return to the subject of the ultra-pluralists. There were three Professors of Divinity in the colonies, with a salary of 800*l.* a year. Each of these Professors also received from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 200*l.* yearly. Now he did not think that that was a proper distribution of the funds of the Society. He could not see, if a person received a salary as a Professor of Divinity, what need there was to give him 200*l.* besides as a missionary. There were also one or two instances of archdeacons getting 200*l.* from the Society as missionaries. He now came to the class of non-residents. Bishop Stanser, not finding it convenient to stay in America, came to reside in England, and received from the funds of the Society a pension of 1000*l.* Four missionaries, who resided in England, were also receiving a pension from the Society, and the missionary sent to Quebec lived in Prince of Wales's Island, which was 800 miles distant from Quebec, and received a salary of 200*l.* a year. In looking over the report printed by the Society, he found that there were forty missionaries in Canada, receiving each 200*l.* yearly. The greater part of these salaries were paid out of taxes collected from the people in England. There were twelve missionaries, each with 100*l.* a year, and also four schoolmasters there, who

only received salaries from 15*l.* to 20*l.*, though they were quite as useful he thought as missionaries. Their Lordships should remember too, that the people of England were paying for the maintenance of the clergy in a country where one tenth part of the whole lands was set apart for that very purpose; but the clergy were not satisfied with that provision, but were calling out for further grants. That provision for their maintenance had been first made in the year 1813, under a noble Lord who was much interested in the colonies, in the times of profusion, extravagance, and Mr. Vansittart, who made a very bad Chancellor of the Exchequer. In looking at the estimates of the present year he found that government gave salaries of 70*l.* to two ministers, to a minister of the Church of Scotland 50*l.*, to another 100*l.*, and to the Lord Chief Justice, 850*l.* In comparing the salaries paid by government to those clergymen with the salaries granted by the Society, he found a great disproportion. He therefore asserted that the comptrollers of the funds of the Society were most unprofitable stewards. He would advise the right reverend Prelates, if they did not credit his statement, to turn to the noble Duke, the first Lord of the Treasury, and ask him what he paid for the ministers of the Church of England and Scotland in the colonies. When the noble Duke informed them that he paid 70*l.* to those ministers, while the stewards of the Society's fund wrote down 200*l.* and 300*l.*, they would be convinced that those stewards were verily and indeed wise in their generation. He would now draw their Lordships' attention to the expenses of this Society at home. He found in the report that the total income of the Society amounted to 28,000*l.*, and their Lordships would be surprised to hear what proportion of that sum was appropriated to the management of the Society's affairs. No less a sum than 1,960*l.* was

applied to that purpose. The different items of that expense were,—for officers' salaries, about 760*l.*; for taxes 21*l.*; for printing and binding the anniversary sermon and report, 666*l.*; expenses attending the public meeting, 70*l.*; committee and other expenses, about 245*l.*; making in the whole nearly 2000*l.* He did not believe that government had ever in the most extravagant times expended the same proportion of its income for paying the expenses of its administration. If the Society were only expending their own money, they might do as they pleased; but it was quite another matter when they called upon the public to pay the sum which they required. It might, perhaps, be told him, that the petitioner was exceedingly troublesome, and that it was very difficult to find any one to agree with him. The petitioner had, however, explained to him the reason of that difficulty. By a general rule of the Society, the missionaries were directed to send home a report of the exact state of affairs in the places to which they were sent, to state where they found no churches nor congregations, and always to report the truth. The petitioner followed the direction, but was informed by Bishop Inglis that he must not do so, as the Society did not like to hear unfavourable accounts. The bishop who thus put himself forth as the keeper of the conscience of the Society, was the proto-pluralist he had spoken of. The petition stated that in the space of fourteen years, the Society had received 131,812*l.*, drawn from taxes imposed on the people, and 43,000*l.* collected under the King's authority, making a total, exclusive of voluntary contributions, of 174,812*l.* Still more money was required, if he were to judge from the report of the Society and the sermon preached by Dr. Philpots. The petitioner was a clergyman of the Church of England, who had gone out to Nova Scotia, and had been transferred from place to place, with

great inconvenience to himself; and from being a witness to the abuses in the management of the Society's funds, he was prepared to prove that more injury than benefit to the objects of the Society was the result. The petitioner stated that the trustees were grossly imposed upon by artful representations. His Lordship then mentioned several instances of reports having been made of new churches being built, and congregations attending in them, in consequence of which salaries were given to missionaries to perform religious duties; which reports were in the end found to be false, the new churches, in many cases, being nothing more than empty shells without boards or coverings. He stated, that the Established Religion, instead of increasing, was losing ground, and public money was granted for the purpose of paying missionaries to persuade the people of Lower Canada, where the Roman Catholic was the established religion, to reject the errors of popery; thus maintaining a war against the established religion of the country. His Lordship then presented the petition, which was signed by Cornelius Griffin.

Ordered to lie on the table.

CORN LAWS.

(March 31. 1828.)

Lord King said he could not allow that opportunity to pass without expressing an opinion upon the present proposition. He had heard it rumoured a day or two ago that the pivot price would be raised 2*s*. ; but now out came the reality, that the addition, instead of being 2*s*., was actually 4*s*.; and at certain points and turns of the market, it was to make no less dif-

ference than 8*s*. between the scale of prices in the new bill and that of last year. To such a system of legislature he might content himself to reply in a single observation, couched in three or four well-known words, and these were "this is too bad." If in fair weather they were to attempt to maintain these prices when the season went beyond the average, what were the people to expect when a reverse took place? He begged on this first movement of the government upon the Corn Laws, to assure the noble Duke (Wellington), that if he meant this to be a permanent bill he was never more mistaken in his life than in endeavouring to effect such an arrangement as this. Last year's bill was bad enough for the country, but this was "too bad," indeed. It was intolerable to expect that such a plan, to increase the market price, could be maintained; it was quite chimerical. The noble Duke had said, let them look to Ireland; and well they might, for Ireland alone had the merit of preventing the consummation of the original design of these corn bill framers; namely, their keeping up the prices at 80*s*. To Ireland this country was indebted for the prices being lowered to 50*s*. or 60*s*. Those who concocted the bill in 1815, and their 80*s*. price, did not contemplate the effect which the importations from Ireland would produce upon the market. It was Ireland then that had enabled the British population to subsist, in spite of these 80*s*. speculators. Bad as last year's bill was, and worse as the present looked, there were, it seemed, individuals who were yet unsatisfied with what they called adequate protection. He wished such people joy of their feelings; a more unreasonable class of expectants had never been left to brood over their chagrin. He was sorry that he neither could agree in the principle of the noble Duke's resolutions, nor in the general doctrine which he had propounded in introducing them.

CORN BILL.

(June 13. 1828.)

Lord King said he was somewhat in doubt as to whether he should oppose or support the bill, and that doubt arose from the measure not going far enough, as he thought, to weaken the monopoly of the landed interest. A noble Lord had expressed his surprise that that should be called a monopoly which, he said, was for the benefit of the whole country. He however thought it was a monopoly for the advantage of one order of the state to the injury of every other. The only part of the bill he really liked was that which repealed the bill of 1815. He would take that opportunity of giving his parting malediction to that iniquitous measure. In his opinion justice had never been done upon that old culprit; even at that moment he felt surprised at the impudence with which that bill had been introduced. The object of those who introduced that measure was to keep the price of corn at 80*s*. in this country, whilst it was only 30*s*. or 40*s*. on the Continent. Some persons imagined that there was a contest going on between the landed and the commercial interests. Now his opinion was that the contest was between the landed interest and the prosperity of the country. To increase the price of corn tended more to check the prosperity of the country, than any other measure. What was it which limited the progressive improvement of any country? An increase in the price of food which necessarily increased the cost of its production; and, in the same proportion, the progress of the accumulation of wealth was retarded. A noble Earl had complained of certain

visionary politicians whom he called political economists; he could assure the noble Earl, that he was not one of the political metaphysicians. He would readily give to the devil all the Scotch metaphysicians that ever existed. He could not help thinking that the noble Viscount (Goderich) was something of a heretic. He separated and confounded substances too much; that was his heresy. The true faith was to allow free trade in every thing; that, indeed, was not only true faith but good works. It had been said that the bill was a compromise between the landed and the commercial interests. He thought the measure ought rather to be described as a compromise between two parts of the same government; and he was not sure that the noble Duke had not gained the advantage, for he had got the high prices, and had only conceded the warehousing system. Finally, he must protest against an unchangeable high duty. He could never consent to consider the present measure as a permanent one. He thought it was only a step which would be followed by a great many more in the same cause.

ADDRESS ON THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS' SPEECH.

(February 4. 1830.)

Lord King then rose. He found it to be absolutely necessary to move an amendment of his own (*a laugh*), for he could neither agree in that part of the address which the noble Duke opposite had moved (the Duke of Buccleuch), respecting the distresses of the country, nor in the amendment of the noble Earl near him (Earl Stanhope), supported as it had been by his speech. The objection he had to his Majesty's speech

was, because it conveyed no adequate idea of the distress of the country, of the nature of the disease, and none whatever of the proper cure. Their Lordships heard from that speech the ten-times-told tale of temporary distress; but he wanted to know the reason why, after fifteen years' peace, the country experienced a constant recurrence of what was called temporary distress. When their Lordships saw distress so universal as the present, no doubt they must think there was a great pervading and adequate cause. That cause was an error of the legislature, but not of the nature the noble Earl supposed. It was the fault of the government, which government could remedy. If their Lordships looked to the speech of the noble Earl, they would find that it bore with it a strong hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt. The noble Earl remarked how well things went on when paper formed the circulating medium. The rents were high; but such things could not last long; and now those who have caused the distress do not want to feel any of it. Those who voted for the Bank Restriction bill found every thing very smooth while it continued, but when there came a specie circulation, they then saw themselves obliged to pay their share of the burdens with which they had before loaded others. This was retributive justice, and Bentham himself could not have invented a punishment more appropriate to the crime. They were suffering because they had encouraged by their voice, and supported by their votes, the depreciation of the currency, and the suffering was just in proportion to the degree of excess in which they had indulged their wishes with respect to that currency. He remembered some lines of a poet, which he considered exceedingly applicable to the situation and expressions of those persons, and which were not more remarkable for their severity than for their truth: —

"Ye ruined squires and scathed nobility;
What boots it now to raise a loud lament
Of grinding taxes and of falling rent,
And fill our senate with your senseless cry?
Time was, the coming mischief to prevent;
But then with flinty heart and tearless eye
You saw your peasants droop — your soldiers die;
Hind paid with rags, and troops to Walcheren sent.
A sturdy swain deprived of his meed,
Even by your war made slavish, lean, and poor;
What reck'd ye? — you but gain'd an ample store.
So now shall pity leave you in your need,
Unmov'd we hear your rant, and howl, and roar,
For none who taste of woe have e'er deserved it more."

For the last fifteen years every thing has been getting bad, but now everything exhibited symptoms of being worse, except perhaps the royal palaces which they saw rising around them. And what did their Lordships suppose this proved? Why, it proved that the progress of society was arrested, and they had arrived at what the political economists call the stationary, which immediately precedes the declining. There have been a variety of reasons assigned at various times for the distress. At one time there was a superabundance of food, at another a superabundance of goods; at a third, they were labouring under a load of paper; at a fourth, under a load of money: all these foolish reasons were assigned as the cause of that sinking and going down which every one experienced. The true reason, he apprehended, was to be found in the odious monopolies which met them at every turn. The nation was, in fact, the victim of monopoly. They had a monopoly of beer, a monopoly of corn, of sugar, of tea; and the effect of all these fell on the consumer [*hear*, *hear*, *hear*]. Every one who suffered from any one of these exclaimed against that monopoly, or against the other, as the monopoly happened to gall them; but no one seemed to care for the poor consumer, who paid for all. He verily believed that the relief which might be afforded by

the repeal of these monopolies would amount to at least one-half the national debt [*hear*]. He was confident that the nation would be a gainer to that amount, and have a good bargain too; for he considered the relief would prove at least equal to 15,000,000*l.* sterling per annum. The price of raw produce had been raised most improvidently by these monopolists; and that was the cause of the distress. By raising the price of the raw produce, the manufactured article was rendered dearer, and then there was no demand. That was their situation at present. The price was raised, the demand was lessened, the profits of course diminished, and then, as a matter of course, capital found its way abroad, instead of being brought into activity at home. This was the effect of monopoly. The landed interest was suffering from monopoly and want of demand; because the manufacturers, who were also suffering from the same causes, could not afford to eat. There were three countries suffering at this moment from the same causes — countries which possessed a superabundance of wealth and resources beyond every other in Europe, and none of which were oppressed from the absence of a paper currency; these were America, France, and England. America, not behind this country in folly, has had the weakness to deprive herself of the advantages nature bestowed on her; and, instead of labouring to increase the exports of her raw produce; weakly endeavours to become a manufacturing country. In France, where the system has been somewhat analogous to that of this country, the people were suffering equal depression, because they too had their monopoly. First, there was the monopoly of iron, which rendered that material two or three times dearer than in this country. That monopoly, equal to a tax on labour, prevented the French from selling their wines. But then there

were, no doubt, many eloquent persons in France who would dwell with ecstasy on the merits of French iron, and exclaim, "What! are we to be dependent on England for our iron?" That, however, was not good for the owners of woods, for it raised the price, and the result was, that France was punished for her monopoly by a tax on labour, by the loss of the sale of her wines, and by a tax on fuel. By these means, nations destroyed their own prosperity; and although he believed there were means of raising this country to a higher pitch of prosperity than she had ever yet possessed, if it could but be prevailed on to become a customer of those nations which were its rivals, yet he doubted the firmness of those whose duty it was to execute such a task. The noble Lord apologised for troubling the House so much in detail, and concluded abruptly by proposing his amendment, to be inserted after "Majesty," in the thirteenth paragraph, which was, —

"That after fifteen years of uninterrupted peace, this House laments that the general condition of the people is not materially improved, or the prosperity of the country perceptibly increased; that, on the contrary, the landed and manufacturing interests, as well as the traders and labourers of every description, have frequently been afflicted, and still continue to be weighed down by severe distress.

"That it is the duty of Parliament to examine into the causes which have produced these distresses, and to remove the impediments which retard the progress of the national prosperity.

"That the necessaries of life, and the materials of manufacture, are rendered dear by taxation and regulation; by these means too much is taken from the industrious classes, and, in many instances, too much is given to the privileged classes.

"That it is a grievous aggravation of the public

burdens, in addition to near 50,000,000*l.* of taxes, deemed necessary for the public service, still further to permit enormous sums to be extorted from the people by the intolerable monopolies of corn, beer, sugar, tea, and other articles, established for the private benefit of powerful and favoured classes, at the expense of the great body of consumers, and of the public good.

" By these monopolies, the cost of the first necessaries of life is enhanced, the rate of profit in all trades diminished, capital driven abroad to seek a more profitable employment, and the productive powers of the national industry are greatly reduced. By restrictions imposed on the import of foreign corn, the markets of other nations are in a great degree closed against us, the demand for the produce of the national industry is limited, and the symptoms of general distress are manifested in the inadequate reward of labour, and in the increasing difficulty of finding any profitable employment for capital and industry.

" By the partial and exorbitant duties of excise imposed upon beer and malt, combined with the double monopoly conferred both on the grower of barley and on those who are licensed to sell beer, the price of that necessary of life is so greatly enhanced, that in the course of eighty years, whilst the population has been more than doubled in number, the consumption of malt has actually decreased.

" By the monopoly conferred on the cultivators of sugar in the British West India Islands, the price of that great article of consumption is very much enhanced at the expense of the people of England, who might be better supplied if permitted to resort to other markets, and who are also, for the benefit of the monopolists of the said islands, burdened with the heavy charge of defending those unhealthy and precarious possessions.

" By the exclusive privilege of navigation and trade to China conferred on the East India Company, the whole supply of tea consumed in the United Kingdom is placed at the discretion of a single company of traders; monopoly in this, as in every similar instance, has produced its usual consequences; the price of tea is greatly increased, as compared with the price of the same article in the free markets of Europe and America; the quantity imported is limited by the narrow views of obtaining a large profit on a small supply, entertained by the monopolist company; the British manufactures suited to the Chinese markets are consequently exported in much smaller amount, and the public thus suffers in the increased price of tea, in the diminished demand for home manufactures, and in the exclusion from all navigation and trade to one of the greatest markets in the world.

" That it appears that these gigantic monopolies, superadded to the heavy load of taxation, have impoverished the country, and produced the public distress.

" That all prohibitions and restrictions imposed for the benefit of particular classes or companies, for the purpose of producing artificial high prices, are no less impolitic than unjust.

" That our own exclusion from the great market of the world, and the cessation of demand at home, are the necessary consequences of our own measures; because it is in the nature of things, that a nation which refuses to buy the productions of other countries, cannot sell its own.

" That we can only expect to derive permanent relief from our distresses, and improvement in our condition, from the strictest economy in every branch of the public expenditure, from the abolition of all exclusive privileges and monopolies, from an unrestricted supply of the first necessaries of life and of

the materials of manufacture, and from a real free trade, by which the whole community as consumers of goods will be greatly benefited, the labouring classes enabled to procure a fair reward, the capitalist to augment those funds by which all labour is supported, and the efficiency of British industry permitted to produce its natural result in enriching the country, and thus to restore and to secure the public prosperity."

On the question whether the words proposed to be left out should stand part of the original motion, the numbers were — Content, 71; Not content, 9: majority against the Amendment, 62.

STATE OF THE NATION.

(February 25. 1830.)

Lord King said, he rose at that late hour of the debate, for the purpose of proposing an amendment to their Lordships. At the same time, he could assure their Lordships that he felt no disposition to attempt to embarrass the government by any vote of his, or by proposing the adoption of any particular measure of his own, far less by supporting the noble Earl's motion, which contained more than met the eye, and came upon the House *cum quibusdam aliis*, the particulars of which had not been stated by the noble Earl. However, the opinions of the noble Earl were well known, and no doubt he would take an opportunity of endeavouring to couple them in some way with his motion if it were carried. It was lest these opinions should be introduced and acted on, that he did not support the motion. However, he thought some

inquiry necessary; because if a change of system, arising out of such inquiry, were not adopted, he saw no reason to think that we should find ourselves in a better situation at the end of the next fifteen years than we were in at present after fifteen years of peace. Their Lordships had been given to understand by the ministers, that they had no plan to propose for the relief of the country; and although it might be proper, as a general rule, to avoid interfering or meddling too much with the country, there were times when such interference was absolutely necessary, and the present he took to be exactly such a period. If the vessel were aground during the ebb tides, it might be very well to wait till the spring tides came to float it, and no exertion might be necessary; but if the vessel grounded during the spring tides, it would be necessary for the crew to stir themselves, to free it from the sand which choked it up, as they could expect no assistance from any thing but their own exertions. Such was the situation of the country: we were past the point at which things might be left to themselves, we must rely upon a judicious and active interference. It was said that in the description of the distress that existed there was some exaggeration: possibly it might be so, but would any one deny that the situation of the country at present was very unsatisfactory? Would it be denied that if we were not in a stationary condition, we were at least in a state of extremely slow advancement? Look at trade and manufacture; profits were little or none, wages exceedingly reduced; he admitted that there was some degree of employment, but at a very low rate. In Barnsley, wages were so low as to make up but 20*d.* a head per week in each labouring family. In other places there was employment, but at such wages as enabled the labourer to save nothing. Every thing was spent upon the bare necessaries of existence. How did this tell, not only

upon the manufacturing but on the agricultural community? It reacted upon rents: if the manufacturing population could merely procure the necessaries of life, they had nothing to spend upon its comforts or luxuries, and therefore it was that agricultural produce was at a low price. Why did manufactured goods sell at a low rate? Was the noble Duke (of Wellington) aware what it was that limited and settled the price of manufactured goods, of which we made more than we consumed? It was regulated by the continental market. How increase the price of our surplus manufactured goods? By taking that from the Continent, which it could give us in return for them. Raise prices, and you raise wages: increase the wages of the manufacturing population, and you benefit the agricultural interests. An increase of the wages of the manufacturing classes would be attended by an increase of the wages of agricultural labourers, though not exactly to the same extent; rents would rise, and the whole country would be benefited. We must extend our market if we wish to benefit the country. If we could not go the whole length that might be desirable in this way, at least let us not be longer duped by the East India Company and the Bank. We had suffered for years and years by their robberies. By these and other causes was the country paralysed; but we had the cure in our own hands, not by enriching one class and impoverishing another, as in the case of alterations in the currency, but by throwing open trade, increasing our foreign commerce, and thus contributing in the highest degree possible to the prosperity of the country.

The Noble Viscount attributed our present sufferings to the transactions of the last twenty-five years: this must be a ground of satisfaction to those who had opposed the profusion of those times. He (Lord King) claimed the honour of being one of these.

Among other things he had opposed a paper currency, although Lord Liverpool frequently asserted that it gave us increased facilities and advantages in war, and drew out the resources of the country to their utmost extent. Lord Liverpool only took a one-sided view of the question: a paper currency might give us facilities in war, but what did it do in peace? It was the great cause of our present difficulties. The House had heard something of reduction of expenditure, and a diminution of taxation. Why? Because the taxes had fallen off. At the termination of the war, it was said we could not go on without a property tax; it was taken away from ministers, yet they contrived to get on. In 1821, a period of distress, reductions were made; but in 1824, a time of prosperity, we got back to our old extravagance; so, in 1829, there had been a falling off of the revenue, and that compelled reductions, of which we should not otherwise have heard. He was a little sceptical on the subject of some of the reductions talked of. The noble Duke (Wellington) said, that his plan was when an office became vacant, to put in a pensioner. Now in the navy estimates (page 24.) in the list of superannuations and pensions to commissioners, secretaries, &c., formerly employed in the civil department of the navy, since January 1829, he found the name of the Hon. Robert Dundas (whose office had been reduced), with an allowance of 500*l.* a year tacked to it, and that of the Hon. W. Bathurst (also reduced) with an allowance of 400*l.* per annum. It would seem as if the noble Duke's plan was first of all to make officers, in order afterwards to make them pensioners; and then, finding them pensioners, to make them officers again, as a saving to the public. Here was an allowance of 900*l.* a year to these two gentlemen; compare that with the pension and pay of Sir Robert Barlow, one of the most meritorious

officers that ever entered the public service of the country. His salary as a commissioner was 416*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, which, added to 456*l.* 5*s.*, his rear-admiral's half pay, did not amount to the sum received by two gentlemen of whose services no body had ever heard. The noble Lord proceeded to draw a contrast between the state of the country now, and subsequently to the last peace. The period between 1782 and 1792 was one of the greatest prosperity; while the fifteen years since 1815, to say the best, evinced the most feverish state of recovery from the mischiefs entailed upon us by the war. It would be disingenuous to omit stating that the Corn Laws were very different during these two periods. In the former period there was a nominal duty of 6*d.* a quarter on the importation of corn. It was unnecessary to do more than allude to the present state of the trade in that article. He did not consider a high price of corn to be consistent with a state of prosperity or an advantageous condition of the revenue. The noble Lord concluded by moving an amendment on the resolution of the noble Earl, "That a select committee be appointed, to inquire into the depressed state of the agricultural and manufacturing interests of the kingdom, for the purpose of ascertaining whether any and what relief could be afforded by an extension of foreign trade."

Lord King, by permission of their Lordships, withdrew his Amendment.

CORN LAWS.

(March 29. 1830.)

Lord King rose to move a series of resolutions on the subject of the Corn Laws. He wished to place upon their Lordships' journals a statement of the views which he took upon that most important subject; and whether at the present time they agreed with him or not, he felt confident, that at no distant time they would feel the justice of those principles which he advocated, and be compelled to adopt them ultimately with a view to the welfare of the people. In approaching this question, it was at least satisfactory, that it had been cleared of one of the difficulties which stood in its way. It was now universally admitted, that one great cause of the existing depression was the too great pressure at present weighing down the productive industry of the country. Mr. Huskisson—he might mention that gentleman's name, as he did not tell the place wherein the language attributed to him was delivered—had said (and he was a great authority upon such subjects), that it was the too great burden upon the productive industry of the people which was the great cause of the existing distress—not the occasional, but the habitual and permanent pressure upon the productive industry of the people. Such being the admitted state of the case, he must complain of the Right Honourable Gentleman for deserting his own principles. Why did he not carry the matter to its full and legitimate extent? Why did he not at once say that the Corn Laws were the grand source of that pressure? It would be easy to prove, that every thing else which affected the productive industry of the people, was not in the ag-

gregate equal to the weight of the Corn Laws alone. They affected the enjoyments of the people at least to the extent of twenty to five and twenty per cent., for without them the cost at which corn could be obtained would be about 50*s*. During the ten years between the French and American wars, the usual price was 48*s*. Supposing that 12,000,000 quarters of wheat were annually consumed, and that the average price was from 15*s*. to 20*s*. more than what he had stated, which was about the truth, then it was plain that the Corn Laws levied a tax on the people to the amount of from nine to twelve millions a year, being greater in amount than the taxes on soap, leather, and on all other articles of necessary consumption. A Right Honourable Gentleman had said, in another place, that it should be the policy of the government of a great nation to place the people committed to its charge in such a situation as that their own soil should produce their food. For his part, he could not conceive any policy more lame or timid, or one more calculated to retard the progress of society. True policy demanded that none but good land should be cultivated. He could not imagine any thing more monstrous than to hear it asserted, that the people of this country should not get their corn from Poland, from Russia, or from any other place wherever it could be found the cheapest, rather than from Hampshire or from other places in which its quality might be inferior, and its price higher. He knew it might be said that we ought to render ourselves independent of the support of other countries: that was a convenient cry to raise—it would form an imposing inscription upon a banner—but what compensation would it prove to a population half fed? It might be said, that if we allowed ourselves to become dependent upon other countries for food, they might at a most critical moment stop our supplies, and that by dis-

couraging the growth of corn in this case, we drove matters to that state in which a small supply would necessarily become the habitual state of the corn market; but what danger would there be of that prohibition, so long as the interests of all foreign nations led them to supply us with all that we were willing to take off their hands, and in return to supply them with all the manufactured goods which they could possibly desire. After adverting to the Bill of 1815, and the impossibility of adhering to the scale of duties and of averages there laid down, he proceeded to contend that the present distress arose from the low rates of profit and the inadequate remuneration of labour. With a greatly increased quantity of trade, there might be a much less amount of nett profit; thus, if the raw material of a piece of calico were 2*s.* 6*d.*, and it formerly sold on the Continent for 10*s.*, the profit upon it would be 7*s.* 6*d.*; but if the value of the raw material were lowered to 1*s.* 6*d.*, and the piece of calico sold only for 5*s.*, the profit would only be 3*s.* 6*d.* upon each piece; and if two pieces were sold instead of one the profit would not equal what it had before been upon one piece. How then were we still able to compete with the foreigner? First, by being satisfied with reduced profits; secondly, by having to pay greatly reduced wages; thirdly, by the substitution of machinery. The consequence was, the most miserable remuneration for labour, and the most inadequate return for capital, re-acting on the landed interest, and occasioning the present want of demand for farms of all kinds, but especially for grass lands. It had been stated in another place, that at present one third less meat was consumed in Birmingham than in prosperous times; and accounts of the same description from Manchester and other manufacturing places would, no doubt, present the same result. Profits were the criterion of prosperity, and how were

they affected by the Corn Laws? In several ways: 1st, by the cessation of that demand for manufactures and produce, which would exist if the Corn Laws did not exist; 2d, by the different level of prices occasioned by the Corn Laws making corn dear in this country and cheap abroad, rival manufacturers were thus created in foreign countries, who availed themselves of the low rate of wages there, and were enabled to enter into successful competition; 3d, by employing labour on the cultivation of poor land, on which the return for capital was, of course, much less than on good land. The level of profit on all capital was determined by the return for capital employed in the cultivation of the least productive soils; if, therefore, bad soils were cultivated, the profit on capital was reduced. What advantages did we not enjoy, were we but at liberty to use them! We were in possession of an unbounded supply of coal, of the most ingeniously contrived machinery, and of a very extensive amount of capital. These advantages were very great, if we could only be prevailed upon to use them; for with them the produce of England would always exchange against a greater amount of the produce of any other country not possessing the same advantages. Suppose, for instance, that the labour of four Englishmen, aided by machinery, would produce manufactured produce which would exchange against the produce of the labour of eight Russians, when applied to the soil, was it not palpably to the advantage of England to make this exchange, since the result was double profits to the capital of England? If, however, they persisted in employing capital where it was unprofitable—if they persisted in laying it out upon the cultivation of bad land, thus realising little or no return, and bringing down all profits to a level with it—the exchange of commodities between this and foreign countries must be disadvantageous. Well

then, if this system were generally disadvantageous to the country, to what particular persons was it advantageous? Why, it seemed that the English landlords thought it was advantageous to them. This, however, he had no hesitation in characterising as one of the greatest mistakes that could be made. It was manifestly for the interest of the landowner to admit foreign corn, and to allow the industry of the country to have free and fair play. For instance, if this were done, the poor rates would be instantly diminished. It was perfectly well known that one fifth only of the produce of the land went to the landlord; and for this small profit what a heavy and disproportionate burden was put upon the community. He did think, that under the word "protection," if carefully considered, they could have a history of the folly of people, of parliaments, and of governments all over the world. Under this word "protection," governments had in all times oppressed the industry of the countries over which they presided. Under the pretence of protection, the industry of France had been oppressed from the time of Colbert downwards. The history of Spain consisted of nothing but protections. Little Holland alone, in its best times, was not so protected; and while it was not, its history might shame the greatest monarchies in the world. In England, we had been protected from the days of Charles II. down to the time of the present Lord Protectors. At one period of the history of the country bounties were the principal feature of our Corn Laws. At that period we paid others for being good enough to eat our food. Now, on the contrary, we had turned round, and imposed restrictions on foreign corn. When we wanted manufactures, we excluded them; now that we wanted corn we excluded that. There was, unfortunately, one point in which these two principles agreed—the country paid and suffered for

both of them. Here he would leave the subject of protection; he might be asked, however, whether it would be possible to admit the principle of free trade? He begged to inquire whether it was possible for the country to go on without it? He was persuaded, that the prosperity of this country depended upon unrestricted commerce. What was free trade but a saving of labour? And what was restriction but a waste of it? The principle of the prosperity of a country was the perfection of the economy of labour, producing the greatest quantity of goods with the least amount of labour. That state of things could not be established without admitting foreign produce in return for our manufactures; and at this moment we were competing with the foreigner who had cheap corn on his side, while on our side we had machinery and capital. Capital was daily increasing abroad, and machinery in the course of introduction; so that, unless we had corn as cheap as our neighbours, we must in the end be beaten in the contest. Those who decried the principles of free trade, meant that every country should do every thing for itself. America, according to them, should not cultivate her soil, but make cottons and hardware. France ought, by the same rule, to neglect the culture of the vine and the olive, and strive to surpass England in making iron. England, instead of endeavouring to buy corn with cotton and hardware, should forego the use of steam and machinery, and employ all her artizans to dig up the heaths of the country. The principle of these gentlemen pushed to its full extent would prevent division of labour, and would compel every man to procure every thing he wanted for himself. But foolish as was the principle when pushed through all its consequences, it was not equal to the wisdom of a young statesman of threescore, called the pope; his Holiness beat all the sages of our country hollow, and

deserved to be held up as a model for imitation. Sensible of the necessity of employment, he issued a decree to prevent the importation of all iron implements for tillage; and no doubt his Holiness boasted that he had provided employment for all the starving peasantry of the Campagna di Roma, and so perhaps he did, but it was by adding to their trouble. His Holiness was not aware that such labour was a painful waste, and but for the decree of his Holiness more would have been obtained at a less cost. His conduct was like the memorable scheme of digging holes and filling them up. His Lordship then proceeded to answer the question, whether it was fit to sacrifice the capital embarked in the cultivation of poor soils? He answered, that the country would be better without such capital so employed than with it.—If he were asked why he did not leave the question at rest, his reply was that it would never be at rest while the Corn Laws were in force, which inflicted so much injustice, and inflicted so much distress. The subject was well understood out of doors, if not in Parliament; and the people were well aware of the contrast presented by the last fifteen years of peace, and the ten prosperous years which followed the American war, and preceded that with France. The Corn Laws put the prosperity of the country, as it were, in Chancery; it could not advance—it was like the motionless person, described by the poet, under the power of a wizard: —

> "He strove to move, while waved the wizard o'er,
> But though he strove, moved not one inch the more."

The country was like an unhappy suitor in Chancery within the power of a wizard, and unable to move. As long as the Corn Laws existed, the country could not advance. It had been said by somebody, as his Lordship saw by the newspapers,—he did not

mean to impute such nonsense to the Noble Duke (Wellington)—that "The Corn Laws worked well,—that the crops had been deficient, but that no blame could be imputed to the Corn Laws." He did not know in what way it could be truly said that they worked well, when the "neat post-waggon" of the state, instead of running on the nail, was imbedded in mud up to the nave. Was it a proof that the Corn Laws worked well, that three millions and a half of taxes had been just repealed? He had never heard of the repeal of taxes while the machinery of government worked well. During the ten years preceding the war of 1792, corn was admitted in large quantities at a nominal duty of 6*d.* per quarter, and the country was then under the administration of Mr. Pitt. He, for one, preferred what some might call the ignorant simplicity of Mr. Pitt to the elaborate network of the noble Duke. The noble Duke might value himself upon the perfection of the machinery of his government: it was, no doubt, very complete; but, like the air-pump, its very perfectness was the destruction of the unhappy animal confined in it. Some other person, in the course of a late debate (not the noble Duke), had admitted that "machinery was, to a considerable degree, injurious to the working classes." This was not by any means the first time it had been said that machinery produced distress; but the true reason why the lower orders were out of work was the existence of the Corn Laws. The invention of the steam-engine, instead of throwing people out of employ, had been the cause of the employment of thousands and tens of thousands. This result had been produced by a corresponding increase of demand; and if now we took corn in exchange for goods, the means of feeding the population would instantly be afforded. The noble Duke, on a former occasion, had talked of the necessity of giving re-

ligious peace; and, by an alteration of the Corn Laws, he would produce peace instead of discontent arising from distress. Before he moved his resolutions, he begged to remark, that in them he had made no allusion to any fixed duty, because it was necessary, in the first instance, to agree upon the principle of an alteration. A noble Earl (Malmesbury), on a former day, had objected to stirring the question; but why was it not to be stirred? and sure he was that it would not be allowed to rest as long as the people were suffering under the infliction of a system so injurious and oppressive. The noble Earl had lately shown a strong disposition to nibble at the averages; yet, in whatever form the subject was brought forward by others, he objected to its discussion: if upon petition, it was interlocutory; and if in the form of a regular motion, it was injudicious. His Lordship concluded by reading and moving the following Resolutions: —

"That all regulations, duties, and prohibitions, which prevent the admission of corn, and increase the price of that necessary of life, are impolitic and unjust.

"A regulation of the trade in corn, for the pretended benefit of the public, is a most impolitic interference of government in the management of the most important of all trades, which government is wholly incompetent to direct, and which it never can attempt to regulate without the greatest detriment to the public interests.

"A duty levied upon corn for the purpose of raising a revenue is the worst of all possible taxes, being, in effect, not less destructive than a curse of sterility inflicted on the soil.

"An absolute prohibition subjects the consumer to the most pernicious and the most odious of all monopolies.

"That Great Britain, by the abundant supply of coals, by the advantages of machinery, by the accumulation of capital, and by superior skill and industry, possesses the rare and inestimable advantage of being able to make the labour of her people more efficient and more valuable than that of any other nation in the world. More efficient, because when that labour is applied in directing the powers of steam and of machinery, it produces more goods than the same quantity of labour can produce elsewhere; and it is more valuable, because that produce will exchange for the produce of more labour in any other country; and in this manner it highly contributes to the increase of public wealth and individual enjoyment. That it is therefore the true policy of England to encourage the full development of her most productive industry, to avail herself of all her great natural and acquired advantages. That it belongs only to the most perverse ignorance, and to the most culpable misrule, wilfully to preclude the country from the fullest enjoyment of these benefits, by prohibiting, under heavy duties (unless when at a famine price), the admission of corn from foreign countries, whose labour applied to more fertile soils can supply that article of first necessity at a far cheaper rate than British labour, when applied to the least fertile soil under cultivation in this kingdom, can produce.

"That since the enactment of the Corn Laws in 1815, the whole of that long period (a period also of uninterrupted peace) has been marked by an unusually low rate of profit in all trades, by an inadequate reward of labour, by the frequent recurrence of distress in the manufacturing districts, and by the heavy pressure of poor-rates in the agricultural counties, — a state of things the most opposite to the increasing wealth and comfort which so eminently distinguished the ten prosperous years succeeding the peace of

1782, when foreign wheat was without any interruption admitted at a nominal duty of 6*d.* the quarter.

"That great and flourishing manufactures, by the superior reward of labour which they are able to afford, tend most materially to improve the condition of all the labouring classes, by the constant demand for the increasing population of their own and of the agricultural districts; they provide also the best market for every description of agricultural produce; they furnish the most ample and the most profitable employment for the new accumulations of capital; they afford the means of promoting, to an indefinite extent, the general prosperity and wealth of the country; or if there be any limit, that limit is only determined by the returns of raw produce which the great market of the world is enabled to supply.

"That the impediments which have been interposed by law to the admission of foreign corn have impaired, and in some degree destroyed the advantages which nature and industry had bestowed upon us; they have checked the demand for our produce; they have greatly repressed the rate of all profits, because the rate of profits in every country must be regulated by the return of that portion of the national capital which is employed in the cultivation of the least fertile soils; they have prevented our labourers from receiving their just reward, by confining them nearly to the home market, when a cheaper supply could be procured elsewhere; they have rendered almost unavailing the advantages which must otherwise have infallibly attended the improvements of machinery, and the superior facilities of manufacture; they have checked the prosperity of the country, impoverished all the productive classes, and, by the most perverse policy, compelled our natural customers

to become our competitors, our rivals, and almost our enemies."

The Resolutions were negatived without a division.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.

(April 1. 1830.)

Lord King said, he had been entrusted with a petition respecting the administration of justice in this country, which, for several reasons, was entitled to an attentive and serious consideration. It was most numerously signed, and by persons of the highest respectability resident in the metropolis. Amongst the signatures would be found that of the most eminent lawyer at the Irish bar (Mr. O'Connell), and the petition, he was given to understand, had been drawn up by the celebrated author of the "Fragment of Government" and of the "Defence of Usury," (Mr. Jeremy Bentham, whose knowledge of jurisprudence was so eminently conspicuous in his writings). The terms in which this document was couched furnished abundant internal evidence of its literary parentage, as the style which distinguished the writer's former productions was discoverable throughout. It set forth that the petitioners, when they sought for information concerning the legal administration of justice in England were referred to the statute law and the common law as the sources to which they should look for wherewithal to satisfy their inquiry. They found, however, in examination that the statute law covered more letter-press than it was possible to lift, and that the common law was sufficient to fill libraries not capable of being con-

tained within that House. The noble Lord concluded with expressing his own opinion, that a proper division of labour in the administration of justice would be found to produce as beneficial a result as the adoption of the principle had already effected in the mechanical arts and manufactures; the facilities which it afforded in the interesting process of pin-making sufficiently attested the practical advantages which would generally accrue from a division of labour.

Petition laid on the table.

REFORM IN PARLIAMENT.

(November 25. 1830.)

Lord King rose to present a petition from the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Corporation of the City of London, in Common Council assembled, praying for a reform in Parliament. He presented this petition with great pleasure, as he had long been a friend of reform; and he presented it now with greater satisfaction than he could have done had he presented it ten days ago, when it first came into his hands; because, then, there presided over the country a ministry which had declared by its chief in that very House that he had no plan of reform to bring forward himself, and that if any other person brought forward a plan, he would always oppose it while he remained in office. After such a declaration, he should have felt that the presentation of this petition, so far as regarded the fulfilment of its prayer, was a hopeless task. He presented it, however, to their Lordships now, after the gratifying declaration which

had been made on a recent evening by his noble friend opposite, with a strong confidence that it would meet with a more satisfactory reception. He would take that opportunity of observing, that the declaration of his noble friend was satisfactory to him, as he hoped it would be to all reasonable persons. They could look for nothing more than that the plan of his noble friend should give satisfaction to the country, and restore the confidence of the people in the Commons' House of Parliament. That was as much as could be expected from his noble friend in any declaration of general principles. He had no doubt that his noble friend would follow up his declaration in the most proper and advantageous manner. That there were defects and blots in the representation of the people in the House of Commons, was a point that no man could deny. The defects were, that the great towns which had grown into importance during the last two centuries, or rather during the last century, were not represented; the blots were to be found in the existence of what were generally denominated the nomination boroughs. It was notorious that a scandalous traffic had long existed of votes for patronage. Those whom Mr. Grattan had well described as the proprietors of Parliament, had too long enjoyed a monopoly of patronage. He firmly believed that no plan of reform would give satisfaction to the country which did not put an end to the nomination boroughs, which were now used only for the detriment and oppression of the people. It was owing to the influence exercised over ministers in the Commons' House of Parliament by those proprietors of Parliament, that the country had been burdened so long with the most expensive, the most extravagant, and the most profuse government that the world had ever seen. As to the other object which his noble friend had expressed his desire to accomplish, — namely, cheap

government, — he would only say, that it was his firm conviction that an unsparing retrenchment could not be carried into effect without a reform in Parliament. The petitioners prayed, he said, for such a reform as would restore to the House of Commons that control over the taxation of the country which it had formerly possessed, and which it ought always to exercise. The greatest and best argument in favour of reform was, that the House of Commons had not exercised that control for years; and to him the want of reform appeared clearly proved by the fact, that those reductions which might have been made, and which, therefore, ought to have been made, fifteen years ago, were only made within the last year or two, when the demand for them became so strong that it could not be resisted. As this petition came from so respectable a body, and as its statements were very short, he begged that it might be read at the table by the clerk. (The petition was read.)

STATE OF THE COUNTRY. — LORD WYNFORD'S MOTION.

(December 9. 1830.)

Lord King spoke as follows: — The noble and learned Lord, — for learned I must call him, and learned I have no doubt he is in his own profession, but learned he is not in the information which is wanted here, or at least he has thrown no light on the opaque atmosphere which a learned gentleman below the bar told us pervaded this House — the noble and learned Lord has moved for a committee to inquire into the causes of the distress which now pervades the country, to devise remedies for it, and to report its opinion thereupon to the House. Taking

the view of this question that the noble and learned Lord has taken, I am surprised that he does not see that the committee for which he moves would, if granted to him, be nothing more than a mere *ignis fatuus*,—that it would only involve him and your Lordships in greater obscurity and deeper gloom,—that it would only plunge him farther into the mire than he has got already,—and that it could not by any accident be of the slightest advantage, either to himself or to the country. The noble and learned Lord has throughout his speech done all he could to deride political economists and the public press; but his derision throughout was nothing better than a lamentable joke. The noble and learned Lord says, that we are reduced to our present wretched and calamitous condition by the doctrines of the political economists, and by the mischievous influence of the public press; now, I venture to tell the noble and learned Lord that it is because the doctrines of the political economists have been neglected, and not because they have been too much attended to, that we are in our present state of suffering. The noble and learned Lord, like all the deriders of theorists and political economists, is a little bit of a theorist himself; and as his theory is not a little extraordinary, let us see what it is, and how he defends it. The notion of the noble and learned Lord regarding capital is certainly of a novel description; he says that there is capital in the country, but that it is unfortunately locked up in the strong box. Does the noble and learned Lord know what capital is? Why, houses are capital, land is capital, food is capital, raiment is capital. All these, I admit, are locked up in a strong box; but then that strong box is as large as the island of Great Britain, and in that strong box I hope they will remain. The noble Lord quoted, I think, part of a speech made by Sir

Robert Peel in another place, to justify his opinion upon that point; but he has not acted quite fairly by that speech, for he has given us part of a line out of it, and has omitted the remainder of it. He says, "Sir Robert Peel told the country that its capital was locked up in a strong box," and then he recommends a one pound note circulation to conjure it from its fastenings. Now, if I recollect that speech of Sir Robert Peel's correctly, he followed up the declaration which the noble and learned Lord just quoted, by putting down that very circulation which the noble and learned Lord recommended. Another part of the noble and learned Lord's political economy is embodied in a complaint that the Russians, the Danes, and the Americans, are all running us hard in the production of manufactures; does the noble and learned Lord know why they are running us hard? If he does not, I will tell him; the reason is, because we will not take their raw produce in return for our manufactures. The noble and learned Lord says, that the reason of their producing manufactures is, because they pay for their things in paper; but the reason is, that we compel them to use their raw produce themselves, instead of taking it into our warehouses, and returning them manufactured goods in exchange. Does the noble and learned Lord suppose that anything is given for nothing? Does he suppose that they will give us their raw produce without receiving anything in return? Their raw produce must be paid for in manufactured goods; we are not permitted to take their raw produce, and therefore they will not take our manufactured produce. That is the mistake into which all the deriders of theory, who are generally the least of practical men and the most of theorists that can be found, are always falling; they never will understand that these countries have nothing

but raw produce to exchange for our manufactured produce, and that when we refuse to take their raw produce, we compel them to convert it into a manufactured state themselves. One more sample of the noble and learned Lord's political economy, and I have done with it for a time; the noble and learned Lord talked very largely of the importance of maintaining the exchanges: he says, "if you import corn, down at once go your exchanges, and there is no knowing where they will stop." I admit that when corn is admitted, on an emergency arising suddenly and contrary to general expectation, the exchanges will probably fall; but then I ask the noble and learned Lord to tell me whether, when there is no corn in the country, he would not rather let the exchanges go down than see the country continue without corn? As the noble and learned Lord has given your Lordships a taste of the quality of his political economy, allow me in return to give you some notion of mine. I think that the great distress which now prevails in various parts of the country arises from this—that the tendency of your legislation for many years back has been to encourage an over-supply of the population, and an under-supply of food. The over-supply of the population has been supported,—indeed I may say has been mainly supported—by that mal-administration of the Poor Laws of which the noble and learned Lord so justly complained. The system of under-paying single men for their labour had an inevitable tendency to make them marry, and was a direct encouragement to make them improvident of the future. I have been told by a clergyman, who has the care of an extensive parish in an agricultural district, that he has often been surprised at the youth of the couple who have come before him to be married. On one occasion, a young lad of nineteen came with a young girl of his own age. My

friend the clergyman said to them, "You are very young; what has induced you to marry so soon?" The man answered, and my friend tells me that he has frequently received the same answer, "I am not married, and therefore I cannot get and you will not give me work. I come here to be married, and then give me work you must." Such a state of things inevitably led to a great increase of population. Then, with this increased population, you have an under-supply of food, owing to the operation of the Corn Laws. Since the year 1815, when those laws were enacted, the supply of corn grown in the country has sensibly diminished. I can prove this point, if necessary, very clearly; but I believe that it is admitted by all who have taken an extensive view of the face of the country, that agriculture is not now in the same flourishing condition in which it was before the Corn Laws were passed; that the land is now driven hard; that much of it has gone out of cultivation; and that, therefore, the produce here now is not equal to what it was. Then if you look abroad, you will see the same circumstances occurring there. We know that in many of the continental states large tracts of land, formerly cultivated as corn lands, have been turned into grass; and in the committee which sat upon the wool-trade, we were even told that the continental farmers, instead of growing corn, had now turned their attention to growing wool. Hence the supply of food, being contracted not only in this country but also on the Continent, must have been greatly diminished, since the first passing of the Corn Laws; hence the labouring classes have not had a belly-full since the year 1815, nor will they have until the Corn Laws are repealed. The diminution in the supply of food would have created great distress and inconvenience, even had the population continued the same; but in the fifteen years which have elapsed

since the Corn Laws received their monstrous birth, the increase of the population has been at least 2,000,000. Thus if the quantity of corn grown both here and abroad be less than the quantity grown fifteen years ago, and if the population who have to subsist on that corn contain 2,000,000 of human beings more than it did then, it is quite evident that there must be a less quantity for each individual to consume. Now, food is capital; and therefore if there be a diminution in the supply of food used by the country, there is a corresponding diminution in the amount of its capital. Hence it follows, that the proportion which ought to exist between the capital and the population of a country is deranged, and that the condition of the population is deteriorated: for it is on the amount of capital compared with the population, that the happiness of the population always depends. Besides, your Lordships ought never to lose sight of this important truth,—that when food becomes dear, it supplies a great encouragement to increase the employment of machinery; for as the increased price of food leads to an increased rate of wages, the capitalist seeks to supply by the use of machinery the labour which costs him so dear. Your Lordships are therefore inflicting a great injury upon the labouring population, when you direct your legislation to produce a high price of corn; for you not only destroy their labour, by preventing them from deriving a supply of cheap corn from those countries which would be glad to exchange corn for the produce of their labour, but you also destroy it by calling into existence a large power of machinery which supersedes it. With respect to the insurrection—for insurrection I am sorry to say it is—which has taken place among the agricultural labourers in the southern counties of England, I think that it will be allowed that it proceeds from severe distress. That distress

has been taken advantage of by mischievous agents; but that there is distress, and severe distress, no man can doubt. How are you endeavouring to meet that distress? By an advance in the rate of wages. If that advanced rate of wages should continue to be paid,—and I am afraid that it cannot,—it will create a greater demand on the food of the country, and, by doing so, will produce a greater consumption of that capital in which you are most deficient. The question, therefore, comes to this—will the capital of the country, diminished as it will be by a greater consumption of food, be replaced by any increase in the profits usually derived from it? Certainly not; and if that be so, then the advance in the rate of wages will have a tendency to lower the general rate of profits, and will thus affect the future prospects of the country. I repeat, that I do not believe that this advance in the rate of wages can be long maintained. It is not natural,—it has been brought about by the necessity of the times; it cannot afford the farmer a remuneration, and therefore it is vain to expect that it will be continued. Instead of directing our attention to the temporary change in the condition of part of the labouring classes, we should look for a change which will benefit all the working classes of the country,—for a change which will not be partial and transitory, but which will permanently relieve all classes, and improve the general prosperity of the country. The labourers, I am sorry to say it, have, during the last two or three years, been reduced to a state of privation almost beyond human endurance and human forbearance. Some relief must be afforded them; but how? If it be by the diminution of the capital of the farmer, that will fall upon the rents;—yes, if the capital of the farmer be reduced, as it necessarily must be, by the augmentation of wages which he has to pay, it will fall upon the rents. It is clear, there-

fore, that an alteration of rents must take place. The question, therefore, for your consideration is, will you allow it to be made? for made it certainly will be, in a manner which will not reduce the amount of distress, but which will keep up all the bad workings of a bad system; or will you come, as in honour and in principle you ought to come, to an alteration of the Corn Laws, which will add to the capital of the country, and to the employment of your artisans in the manufacturing towns, and which, by giving that class of your population increased means of subsistence, will spread comfort through every other class of the community connected with them? You have already tried the fatal experiment of the Corn Laws long enough. The injury which you intended to others has recoiled on your own heads. You are the greatest sufferers by it now; and a worse fate than your present will befall you, if you are infatuated enough to persist in your present course. The prosperity of the country has decayed before it; that decay is still going on, and the question therefore is, will you consent to let the country enjoy that prosperity which I am certain it still can enjoy, if you take off that dead weight, the Corn Laws, which now oppresses it? or will you continue to stand by the experiment of the Corn Laws, which even the noble and learned Lord declares to be inefficient for the purposes for which it is designed, for he admits that the agriculture of the country has declined under it? The sooner you come to an alteration of the Corn Laws, and come to it at last you must, the better will it be for yourselves and the country. I shall certainly vote against the motion of the noble and learned Lord.

ON TITHES.

(December 14. 1830.)

Lord King, having to present a petition from the inhabitants of Southampton, complaining of the grievances under which the country at present suffered, would make a few observations which he would be unwilling to make, if he did not see in their places noble Lords to whom some allegations of the petitioners had reference. The complaints concerning the tithes were now as general and as earnest as were formerly those complaints of taxation, which were said by a noble Lord, now no more, to originate in "an ignorant impatience." However light that noble Lord then made of those complaints, their frequency and their vehemence at last effected a reduction of taxes to the amount of more than seventeen millions. He believed that the prevailing spirit of complaint, which might, perhaps, be said to arise from "an ignorant impatience" of desolation, could not fail to bring about a similar reduction of the tithes. It was known that the farmers generally had not made much exertion to prevent the recent outrages, and it was also known that their disinclination to interfere was occasioned by the pressure of their own burdens, of which the tithes constitute a principal part. Aware of the extent of such dissatisfaction, a reverend Prelate had last year brought before their Lordships a bill for the commutation of tithes. There was a time when such a measure might have removed the discontent, but now it would be ineffectual. Twenty years ago Mr. Pitt had devised a plan for the permanent commutation of tithes into three per cent. stock; and now some measure, equally comprehensive and effectual, must be adopted. All lovers of abuses

could find out something of good to be attributed to every abuse, however gross, except to tithes. They said that the Corn Laws worked well, that colonial slavery worked well, and that corrupt Parliaments and heavy taxation worked well,—but none of them would go so far as to pretend that tithes worked well. The ingenuity of all the divines that ever existed, whether Jews, Catholics, or Protestants, could not prove that the tithes in any age worked well,—no, not the Sanhedrim, nor their successors the Conclave, nor their successors the Bench of Bishops, could make out the proposition. That the tithes were injurious to the country was indisputable; but the manner of collecting them was still more so. The defenders of tithes said, indeed, that they being a tax upon the gross produce, were paid by the consumer as completely as if the tithe receiver had his servants stationed at the baker's door, to collect the tax from the purchasers of bread as they carried it away. For his part, he (Lord King) considered it a tax upon the labour and capital of the cultivator: but as the ablest writers on political economy had not been able to settle the question, he would leave it to the reverend conservators of church property, to the noble and learned Lord opposite (Lord Wynford), who so much derided the political economists, to explain the way in which the tithe impost operated. It was their interest to discover the means by which their property in that tax might be saved from the hungry jaws of the consumer, upon whom they supposed its payment ultimately devolved. For his part, he thought that impost a public nuisance. It was injurious to the landlord, for it made a positive deduction from his rent: it was oppressive to the cultivator, for it rendered the gains of his labour variable and uncertain; it was injurious to the capitalist, for it prevented the employment of capital upon land, at a time when it could find but few fields for profitable

employment; and, lastly, it was impoverishing to the nation at large, inasmuch as it seriously diminished production. One effect had been to drive land from agriculture to grass — as, with the tithe upon it, it would not pay the expense of cultivation. How stood the case with land at 10*s.* an acre? It should yield under corn five rents, or produce 50*s.*; while under grass it produced but 25*s.*; yet, as it paid no tithe, the landlord got two-fifths instead of one, and was as well off with the gross produce equal to 25*s.*, as he would be if it equalled 50*s.*, paying tithes. To the influence of the tithe system he attributed the well-known fact, that less inferior land in proportion was under cultivation in England than in France, although the former country had a greater population to support, in proportion to her surface, and more abundant capital ready to be employed in cultivation. Their Lordships knew that before the Revolution the full tithe was never exacted there, and their Lordships knew that since that period tithes were altogether abolished. He was satisfied that, not even in Spain nor in Italy, where the power of the Church was excessive, were tithes exacted with half the rigour they were collected with in England. The pernicious practice of paying the wages of labourers out of the poor rates was wholly to be attributed to the tithe system. The farmer, through his aversion to that system, contrived to have the labourer paid in that way, in order to throw part of the burden of wages upon the tithe receiver, because the tithes of the parish were included in the assessment for the poor rates. That custom had caused more mischief to the country than all the other pernicious customs that prevailed; and to this system it could clearly be traced. He did not think that any mode of commutation for a number of years would effect much good. The Act would be no better than a dead letter, for

who would make an agreement for sixteen years, or lay out a large capital, subject to the sleeping partner coming in at last to share the profits? In the time of King William, 140 years ago, Scotland had acted with the usual good sense which had distinguished that country, and made a permanent and fixed Church settlement, by which capital was encouraged and agriculture improved. He wished that England would imitate the excellent example of Scotland—get rid of the tithes altogether, and make some distinct and permanent provision for the clergy. To her exemption from that system he believed Scotland owed a great part of her present excellent cultivation. Although he did not wish to speak on the subject with any appearance of bad feeling, yet he must say that, as the upholders of tithes would not be prevailed upon by such reasons as had hitherto been offered to them, they would ultimately, and before long, be compelled to yield to such arguments as last session were so successful in obtaining another long denied concession. He wished to see some arrangement adopted by which the lands of the deans and chapters, who were utterly useless as ministers of religion, should be made available for the support of the working part of the clergy. He hoped to see entirely cleared away from the Church all the cumbrous lumber of golden and of brazen prebends, together with the deans and chapters. He wished that, as formerly was the case, the prelacy should be composed of men chosen from among the working clergy for their merit by their brethren. But since the days of *præmunire*, the prelates were no more the representatives of the clergy, than the gentlemen sitting in another place, as members for Gatton and Old Sarum, were representatives of the people. He believed that Henry VIII. was the first who used the phrase, of which their Lordships had heard so much a few evenings since, that he "would do as he liked with his own." As he

(Lord King) should take another opportunity of adverting to matters alluded to in the petition, he should then conclude by presenting to their Lordships the humble petition of certain inhabitants of Southampton, praying for the redress of grievances, and for the removal of burdens, especially of the tithes.

The petition was ordered to lie on the table.

INCONVENIENCES OF TITHES.

(February 7. 1831.)

Lord King said, seeing several right reverend Prelates in their places, he would take that opportunity of presenting several petitions against tithes, which he should not have thought it fair to present in their absence. The first petition he should present was from persons residing in Somersetshire; and it was very numerously signed, being signed, indeed, by several thousand people connected with agriculture. They said that their petition was directed against the pernicious tithe system. They stated that they were in great distress; that the farmers could get no profit, and the labourers no employment on account of the tithe. They stated that tithes, in their origin, were intended to answer very different purposes from that to which they were applied at present; that originally the tithes were divided into three portions — one went to the clergyman, another to repair the church, and the third to maintain the poor. But these petitioners stated, that they had now to maintain all the poor and keep the church in repair, and that the whole of the tithes went to the ministers. The mode in which the tithes were col-

lected they described as a barrier against improvement, and he must say that there was great truth in the sentiments of the petition. He knew that it was said that tithes were property; and so they were, but very different from individual property. It was said that tithes were the property of the Church, and it was asked if they were not as sacred as other property? But the property of the Church stood upon a different footing from individual property. The Church establishment was the creature of the State; it was paid for, and in such a manner as the State pleased. In that respect, then, it was perfectly different from individual property. A reverend Prelate had stated on a former evening that Church property was more ancient than other property; it might be more ancient than some other property, but it was at all times the creature of the State and public property; it was conferred by the State, and it was held as public property intended for the benefit of the State. It was different from private property, which was necessary for the good of society. Without private property we should have nothing but the spontaneous produce of the earth; but without tithes we should have a great deal more valuable produce of art and skill than at present. Tithes then and private property operated in different ways. The institution of private property increased the produce; the institution of tithes lessened it. They were a tax on production; they hindered capital from being applied to the land; and but for them more capital would be applied, and more produce obtained. It was now necessary to pay tithe on the gross produce of the land, and of capital and labour united, which prevented the application of capital to land, and prevented the employment of labour. Nothing was more prejudicial than a tax on the gross produce of the land; and it was one which any prudent rulers of the

Church would now try to have commuted. He said commuted; because the time for composition was gone by. There must be a commutation measured in a fixed corn rent, not liable to alteration, and which would not give a greater than a fixed share of the produce to the tithe owner, not increasing with the capital employed. He believed that a few years ago when the Church proposed composition, it might have done; but now nothing short of commutation would do. The right reverend Prelates would now find it prudent to come to some moderate commutation. His Lordship concluded by presenting a petition from Somersetshire, praying for a commutation of tithes.

The Bishops of Lincoln, and Bath and Wells, having spoken:—

Lord King wished to express his satisfaction at hearing that the reverend Prelates had now come to a commutation of tithes, which was something very different from the composition of tithes proposed by a right reverend Prelate. A commutation was very different from a composition, such as was proposed by the bill of the right reverend Prelate, which went to give a power to the tithe-owner to lease his tithes for twenty-one years. Commutation must be by a fixed rent — a certain amount of corn not subject to vary — a payment totally different from tithe. He was glad to understand, that now commutation and not composition was agreed to, and commutation was not the plan of the right reverend Prelate. The right reverend Prelate who spoke last said that there was nothing peculiar in the situation of Somersetshire. That was true. The evils were everywhere the same, and were not confined to Somersetshire. There was nothing peculiar in the hardships they suffered. They were common,

unfortunately, to all the land. The right reverend Prelate who spoke first (the Bishop of Lincoln), said, he (Lord King) would have great difficulty in making out that tithes were public property; and he stated that tithes originated in the grants of private individuals. That was perhaps true; but the greater part of the livings of the country were now in the hands of the Church or the Crown, and these were undoubtedly public property. The advowsons belonging to individuals were of a different nature, but the advowsons belonging to the Church or the Crown were public property. It was said that tithes were given to secure the services of the clergy. Had they had that effect? He wished to learn of the right reverend Prelates and their Lordships if this purpose had been answered? He was surprised, indeed, at that argument; for were not, he would ask, pluralities and non-residents the disgrace of the English Church? There were, he believed, about 10,500 benefices in England, and in these there were only about 6000 residents. If the grant were intended to secure the services of the clergy, it had failed in its effect. Hardly one half of the parishes under the Church of England had resident incumbents; they might reside in other benefices, but nearly half the parishes of England were destitute of resident incumbents. This was one of the great and crying sins of the Church of England, from which the Church of Scotland was entirely free. He would use this circumstance as the argument *ad verecundiam*. With all the tithes and emoluments belonging to the English Church, it could not procure residents, but the Scotch Church obtained residents without tithes. We had bishops and non-residents; in Scotland they had residents and no bishops. Our hierarchy, our costly hierarchy, could not effect that which was done in Scotland without a hierarchy. This was the argument *ad verecundiam*.

The hierarchy had no power to prevent pluralities, or, if it had the power, it did not exercise it. As to tithes being property, he must repeat, that they were very differeut from private property. Was it necessary that there should be a tax on the gross produce? Tithes were a pernicious sort of property. Under the present circumstances of the country, it would be well in our statesmen to make a change in tithes, taking care to respect the life-interest of those who now claimed them, but making an alteration that would get rid of them. They were pernicious; all other property was beneficial. He thought it was not very wise in the right reverend Prelate to refer to the French Revolution. Their Lordships might depend on it, that in tithes there must be an alteration — that they would not be much longer suffered to exist; and by placing them on the same footing as property in land, the land-owners might expect that their property too must be altered.

Lord King presented two other petitions from places in Somersetshire, with the same prayer. He would take the opportunity of saying, that he had no doubt that the right reverend Prelates found the discussion very inconvenient, but he was afraid, as he understood that a great number of petitions were coming to him from different parts of the country, that they would be subject to those inconveniences *de die in diem*. The right reverend Prelate (the Bishop of London) found great fault with the lay impropriators as having caused all the evils of the Church. This was something new. Hitherto he had always understood that the lay impropriators were the prop and stay and bulwark of the Church. He had always heard that the clergy were glad that a part of the Church property was in the hands of laymen because they would fight their own battles, and

the Church might find shelter under their guns. The right reverend Prelate found that the abuses of the Church property, the robbery—he begged pardon the abstraction, as the right reverend Prelate called it—of the property of the Church, was the cause of the non-residence. But the property, the right reverend Prelate complained of having been abstracted from the Church, was not given to the English Church but to the Catholic Church. Before the Reformation all that property belonged to the Catholic Church. The Reformation gave its property to the English Church. The Church Establishment of England as formed at the Reformation, was entirely the creature of the State. The right reverend Prelate perhaps wished to make it out that the Church was superior to the State; but he must contend that it was made by the State. He did not mean to say, the Church which was an assembly of the faithful, but the Church Establishment was different. The Church Establishment was the creature of the State and nothing else. The right reverend Prelate said that the Bill prohibiting pluralities, and enforcing residence, was supported by the Bishops, and opposed by the proprietors of lay advowsons. The times however were now changed; let the Bishops now bring forward such a Bill, and it would be more successful. Such a measure should have his support. It was not creditable to the Church of England—it was not creditable to those who had the management of it—that they should yet suffer the vice of pluralities to exist.

Petitions laid on the table.

PLANS FOR COMMUTING TITHES. — PLURALITIES, AND NON-RESIDENCE.

(February 8. 1831.)

Lord King said, that having some other petitions to present on the subject of tithes, he must renew that, to some persons, inconvenient discussion, but to others most convenient discussion, which was begun and objected to yesterday. Yesterday he had brought the Somersetshire militia into the field, — to-day he came down with the militia from Gloucestershire. He was happy to say that all persons appeared now to agree that some alteration was necessary, and it only remained to find out what alteration. One of the right reverend Prelates had yesterday asked him if he had any plan for making the change. He had; he had three plans. The first, which was perhaps the most simple and the best, was to charge the land with a proportion of the rent for the maintenance of the clergy; or he would propose that an amount of rent, equal to the annual revenues of the clergy, should be paid to them, and they should be entitled to that sum in all times to come. His second plan was to give them a corn-rent equal to the tithes, and they should always have that quantity of corn, or the value of it, according to the market rate. He was willing, too, to admit that the quantity of corn should be determined by the actual receipts of the clergy during the last seven years. After ascertaining the amount, he would by this means fix the claims of the clergy for ever. Another, and his third plan was, to take the whole of the tithes and the Church property and sell them, and pay the proceeds into the hands of the government, who should take

upon itself to provide a due maintenance for the clergy; and the overplus, if any—and he was sure there would be a great overplus—should go to the public; or a part of the overplus might be employed to provide better for the working clergy. One thing, however, was needful, let it be done as it might, and that was, to abolish that most impolitic tax, the tax upon the gross produce of the land. It was necessary to do this to make property beneficial. To secure private property promoted the increase of the produce; but tithes curtailed the produce of the land. It was said that there was no difference between Church property and other property. But sometimes the clergy said that there was a great difference between the Church property and other property. The clergy knew very well that maxim of law, *nullum tempus*, and on that they acted. Nothing, they said, could bar the right of the Church; their claims went back to the days of Richard II., and no other property was on the same footing. This was a difference, then, between Church property and other property, on which the clergy were ready enough to insist when they had any claims. Then they said the Church property was different from other property. Now he said that it was. One of the right reverend Prelates yesterday stated, that the bishops had brought forward a measure, or a bill, he did not know which, and he wished the right reverend Prelate had been more explicit; but the reverend Prelate said, the hierarchy wished for a measure strictly to enforce residence, and that this measure was defeated by the lay impropriators, or the lay owners of advowsons. They had defeated the measure because they thought it would diminish the value of their advowsons to enforce residence. He knew not what measure was meant, or what object the bishops had sought to accomplish; but he was disposed to assert, that the non-

residence was caused, in a great measure, by the bishops themselves. The greatest number of non-residents, he believed, was to be found in the families of the bishops themselves.

TITHES.

(February 10. 1831.)

Lord King, on presenting some more tithe petitions, wished to suggest to the right reverend Prelates, that they would act prudently, under the excited state of public feeling, if they would inform the country, not his Lordship, what was the plan they intended to propose. That would tend to allay the irritation of the people, and the country would know what it had to look to. He submitted that to the consideration of the right reverend Prelates. When he first presented a petition to their Lordships on the subject of tithes, on Monday, he believed he stated that he would argue the question solely as a simple political economist, and he had not made a single observation on many of the questions which had attracted attention. He had not said one word about pluralities, nor one word about non-residence: the whole of those subjects had been brought forward by the over-zeal of a right reverend Prelate in defending the Church. That right reverend Prelate had charged the lay patrons with being the cause of non-residence, and had provoked the whole discussion. The right reverend Prelate said, that they had smothered a bill for preventing non-residence; but when his noble friend (the Earl of Radnor) asked the right reverend Prelate to specify the bill, he had not given a very satisfactory account. He believed that he could give a better account than

was given by the right reverend Prelate. He was old enough to remember, that about twenty-five years ago an attorney excited a great sensation by the number of *qui tam* actions he brought to recover the penalties of a great number of clergymen, for non-residence. It was necessary to check these actions; they were an attack on the Church in the tenderest part. Chancellors, and lawyers, and civilians, and clergymen, were all consulted how to prevent these *qui tam* actions. The informations were laid, no doubt, for the penalties; and the informer had laid them equally against persons who were altogether absent from their parishes, and against those who resided in their parishes, but did not live in the parsonage. This was an error. The learned lawyers, civilians, and chancellors, smote their foreheads to find out how they might relieve the Church from the terror of these proceedings, and they suggested the means. Sir William Scott, he believed, brought a bill into the other House, by which the *qui tams* were to be put an end to. The bill was sent down to Oxford, to receive the suggestions of that learned body for its improvement, and in order to render it more effectual. The bill purported to be a bill to make the clergy reside: the real object of it was, to allow them to be non-resident; and no bill, he believed, had ever more effectually answered its real purpose. The lay patrons were accused of causing the non-residence, but there was no reason to believe from the *qui tam* actions that only their incumbents failed to reside. He believed that it was found that as many non-residents were among the dignitaries of the Church, as among the incumbents who derived their situations from lay patrons. He remembered that the bill he had alluded to was opposed very much by a noble Earl, then in the other House, who was as much distinguished for his

zeal against the Curates' Bill, as he was since distinguished in that House for his zealous support of all measures of reforming corrupt boroughs. That noble Earl had then fought with him in the good cause, night after night, and hit hard at abuses — very hard — harder than he now hit the reformers, though he had snapped at his (Lord King's) fingers the other night. He did not now hit so hard as formerly. The right reverend Prelate had charged the laymen with being the cause of non-residence, and he hoped therefore, that the right reverend Prelate would agree to a return of all persons holding pluralities, distinguishing whether they were held under lay or ecclesiastical patronage, including ecclesiastical corporations. Such a return would show whether more pluralities were held under lay, or under ecclesiastical, patronage; and their Lordships would see which class was most deserving of the accusation of causing non-residence. It was said, as a sort of excuse for pluralities, that they would greatly increase the number of curates. The curates resided, and not the incumbents. It was said, too, that the curates did the duty as well as the incumbents. But what lesson did that teach the public? It was admitted that the duty was as well done by the curates for one quarter of the salary. The public would be apt to apply to ecclesiastical offices the principle that was now acted on in civil offices, where it was found that the deputy did all the duty; namely, to abolish the principal office, and retain only the deputy. It was a dangerous lesson to teach the public, that the curates did the duties of the Church better than the incumbents, at one-fourth of the salary. With respect to residence, he must say, that he highly approved of the charge of the Bishop of Winchester, who spoke of a benefice without a resident incumbent, as an ecclesiastical solecism, and as an abuse which

both clergy and laity were called upon to prevent. The charge of the right reverend Prelate did him great credit. He objected to tithes as a mode of paying the clergy. They were instituted in a barbarous age, when the state of society was different from its present state; and though tithes might be suitable then, they were unsuitable now. They might suit such a country as Poland, where the land was ploughed, and then left to the care of nature to restore to it what the agriculturist had taken from it. Tithes impeded agriculture, — they prevented the application of capital to land; and there was no property more prejudicial than a tax on gross produce. No jury of twelve men would say, that any greater benefit could be conferred on the country than a commutation of tithes. He would read to their Lordships an opinion of a gentleman, a very sensible man, as to property: he was a republican, and therefore his opinion on some subjects would not be much valued by their Lordships; but republicans liked property as well as other men. That author observed, "that if there be one natural right recognised by all, it is the right of each succeeding generation to the earth and all its produce, and it is only inherited by private persons under the laws for the good of society." That was Jefferson's opinion, who had placed property on a true foundation. For himself, he objected to tithes, that they diminished produce, and diminished the beneficial effects of the right of property. The noble Lord concluded by presenting a petition from Tyd St. Giles, Ely, for an alteration in the tithe-system.

RESIDENCE OF THE CLERGY.

(February 14. 1831.)

Lord King rose to move their Lordships for a return of the number of resident and non-resident clergy in the several benefices of England and Wales, distinguishing each; and also distinguishing those non-resident who held their livings by church, from those who held by lay, patronage. This was similar to motions which had been made and agreed to heretofore. On examining the books in the library, he found the last return of the kind was in 1813. He should, therefore, move to have the returns dated from the last returns on the subject. The great evil of non-residence arose from pluralities; and the defence was, that some of the livings were so poor as not to be sufficient, singly, for the support of a clergyman. Now this argument was good if it applied only to small livings, but it was no defence for the rich pluralists who held two or three livings, any one of which would be sufficient for the support of the incumbent. If the evil lay in the poor livings, then the remedy was easy. It would be sufficient to prevent all persons from holding more livings than one, except they were very poor livings. A right reverend Prelate had told their Lordships not long ago, that if the whole of the ecclesiastical revenues were divided amongst the clergy, the average amount would be only 365*l.* 18*s.* 4*d.* each. Now he (Lord King), on reference to a work which he had consulted on the subject, found six hundred clergymen who possessed more than one living of 645*l.* each on an average. The proper limit would be, that no living should be allowed to be held with another where the

amount of salary exceeded the average of what was paid to the whole clergy. What, he would ask, was the object of holding these pluralities? Was it to equalize the wealth of the Church, as it respected the clergy? He would maintain that it was no such thing. That was not the case; and he would contend, that the lay patrons were not the cause of bestowing different benefices on the same person. He could cite many instances where the Church granted those ecclesiastical preferments to individuals already amply provided for. The last that attracted his attention was mentioned in a provincial paper of the 12th of February, from which he found that the rich living of Wisbeach, which averaged 5000*l.* a year, had been bestowed on the Rev. Mr. Bertie, son-in-law to the Bishop of Ely, who was already provided for. He believed that the difficulties were very considerable in correcting the system of pluralities; but he would ask, what attempt had the right reverend Bench made to remedy this acknowledged evil? He believed that, in many instances, they had caused the duty to be better performed than it used to be; but still he objected to the principle. He found in many places, where the Church were the patrons, that the remuneration to the clergy employed was worse than elsewhere. He knew, on some Church property held by the see of York, that there were several instances where the clergy received not more than 30*l.* a year. In one case he knew of a valuable college living, worth 2000*l.* a-year, whilst the curate only received 30*l.*, and a subscription was made by the parish to raise it to 70*l.* *per annum.* These were instances which clearly showed that the property remaining in the Church was as much the prey of pluralists as that which was in the hands of laymen. They clearly showed also, that a great property evidently remained in the Church, and did not come within the principle

of abstraction, as had been stated on a former night by the right reverend Prelate. In those cases, he repeated, where the livings belonged to ecclesiastical bodies, the officiating clergy were worse remunerated than they were under other circumstances. The doctrine held by the right reverend Prelate, that every thing not held by the Church was abstracted from it, was a most extensive and comprehensive one. Bishop Horsley, though a high-churchman, held language on this point very different from that which they had heard the other night. His doctrine was perfectly moderate compared with that laid down on the occasion to which he referred by the right reverend Prelate. The noble Lord concluded by moving for "An abstract of the number of resident and non-resident incumbents in England and Wales, distinguishing the places; and also distinguishing those incumbents who held their benefices from corporate bodies or from the Church, and those who held them from lay impropriators."

His Lordship withdrew the latter part of his motion, agreeably to the recommendation of Earl Grey, for the purpose of ascertaining whether it might not be put in a shape better calculated to attain the object in view: — former part agreed to.

COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH PORTUGAL.

(February 21. 1831.)

Lord King had listened with no slight disturbance of his risible muscles to the funereal orations of the noble Viscount (Strangford) and the noble Duke (Wellington) opposite, over the lately-departed,—no, not actually defunct, but *in articulo mortis*, and ever-to-be-lamented—Methuen Treaty. Of course the sorrow was most deeply felt, and had no hypocritical reference to self. Nobody said, "What will become of us? The Methuen Treaty is about to be repealed, and the glory of old Port, and still older prejudices, is about to depart for ever. What, in the name of the good old times, do these liberal ministers mean to do next?" Of course the observations of the noble Duke and the noble Lord opposite were not at all meant to embarrass the government. Oh, no: all they meant was, to sing a *Te Deum* over the Methuen Treaty; and, as at the wakes in Ireland, if any row sprung up at the funeral, it was not their fault, nor meant at all to embarrass the proceedings. After the example of the noble mourners, the next party their Lordships would have complaining of the direful consequences of abrogating the Methuen Treaty would be the commercial interest, then the colonial, then the shipping, then the lead, if it has not complained already, then the barilla, and, last of all, the band of gentlemen-pensioners, lamenting the good old times as never to return. "But," says the noble Lord, "recollect the amount of British capital that has been expended on the faith of the Methuen Treaty." Agreed; but was that capital, in a national

point of view, well employed? Were we not, in fact, paying a monopoly price for wines, which, but for that pernicious monopoly, we should be receiving on much more mutually advantageous terms? Then they were told, that they were giving up the large trade we already possessed with Portugal, for the sake of France, with which we held but a very limited commercial intercourse. This was all very true, and he was sorry for it. But the reason was, the very mismanagement of our trading regulations, the removal of which was then the burden of the noble Lords' complaint. Let them remove the mischievous shackles which a short-sighted jealousy had imposed upon our trade with France; and they would find that our imports and exports to and from that country would be an annually increasing important item of our fiscal revenue.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

(March 3. 1831.)

Lord King said, that the noble and learned Lord, it appeared, considered the principle of the old constitution to be, to give the right of voting to the great lords, who were tenants *in capite* of the Crown. If so, then, in the estimation of the noble and learned Lord, the perfection of the system was to be found in Scotland, where the superiors or tenants *in capite* had the monopoly of the right of voting, and where there was no representation that deserved the name; and yet this was what the noble and learned Lord considered to be the principle of the old constitution of England; and such was the principle which he would wish to establish here. He could

not hear these attacks on his Majesty's ministers, without expressing his most cordial approbation of their measure of Reform, and his respect for and gratitude to them,—a feeling which, he was persuaded, he shared with the immense majority of the most respectable and substantial part of the community. It was a real constitutional and effective reform, which restored the right of sending members of the House of Commons to the people; a right of which they had now for a long time been unjustly deprived. It was a measure of the greatest importance that had been recorded in the history of this country, since the expulsion of James II., and its adoption was essential to the preservation of the liberties of the country; for attempting to trample on which the infatuated race of the Stuarts were driven from the throne, and expelled the country. It was a plan which would insure to the country liberty, peace, and safety, and one for which the ministers deserved the deepest gratitude of the nation. In the quarter of a year in which they had been in office, they had brought forward this great measure of parliamentary reform, and they had also brought forward a great measure of reform in the law, which no one could have brought forward except his noble and learned friend on the woolsack. Nor did their merits stop here; for they had exposed the malversations with respect to the public money which had for some time prevailed in the Admiralty; and there was reason to believe, that they would expose malversations and abuses in the Colonial department. If these things were not sufficient to entitle them to the gratitude of the country, he did not know how any ministers had ever been entitled or could be entitled to it.

PLURALITIES IN THE CHURCH.

(July 15. 1831.)

Lord King said, that a bill had been before their Lordships for some time, but which had latterly made no progress, intended to prevent the holding of pluralities. He had looked into the provisions of that bill, and he thought that they were quite inadequate for the proposed object. Their experience of what had taken place with regard to the Union of Wicklow, was a sufficient proof that the vesting of a discretionary power in the hands of an archbishop was not sufficient to prevent this evil. He (Lord King) had therefore prepared a bill on the subject, which he would now beg leave to present to their Lordships, and which, in his opinion, was calculated effectually to put an end to the practice of holding pluralities. This was not the proper stage to discuss the merits or to enter into the details of this bill; but he would briefly state to their Lordships the leading features of it. He proposed, in the first instance, that above a certain sum no benefice with the cure of souls should be held *in commendam*, and he fixed the amount at 500*l.* a year. That sum, he believed, was considerably above the average value of all the livings in England. Such a provision as that, he thought, would put an end to the practice of holding pluralities. He farther proposed, that where a clergyman held a benefice *in commendam* which was above that sum, he should not have the power at law to recover tithes or other dues beyond that amount; and that legal proof, given by the owners of land in the parish, of his having received that amount, should

be an effectual bar to his recovery by legal process of any sums beyond that amount. That provision would effectually answer the object which he had in view; and if their Lordships really wished to put an end to this evil, they would pass such a measure as that. He was thankful to the most reverend Prelate (the Archbishop of Canterbury) for the measure with regard to the composition of tithes, and the measure regarding pluralities, which he had introduced, but the latter would not be effectual, and he (Lord King) therefore hoped that the most reverend Prelate would give his support to the bill, of which he then moved the first reading.*

* *Lord King's bill as reported in the "Times."*

"Whereas the non-residence of the clergy on their respective benefices is contrary to the original compact and purpose for which tithes were granted, and injurious to the true interests of the Church: and whereas the abuse of pluralities, when two or more rich benefices are held by the same incumbent, is the cause of great scandal both in England and in Ireland; and the practice of holding several benefices is indefensible, except where the annual income from benefices separately is too small for the decent maintenance of the clergy; be it therefore enacted, &c. that no two or more benefices, livings, donatives, perpetual curacies, or other preferments in the Church, having cure for souls, within any diocese of England or Ireland, shall be held by the same incumbent, the aggregate value whereof shall exceed the sum of *500l.*, unless he shall have been in actual possession of all this preferment before the passing of this act. And be it further enacted, that if by any contrivance, misrepresentation, or other contravention of the true intent and meaning of this act, any spiritual person shall hold any two or more benefices in plurality, the annual aggregate value of which shall exceed the sum of *500l.*, he shall have no power to enforce by law the payment of any tithes, rents, dues, or emoluments, over and above that sum; and on proof being given that the said sum of *500l.* of lawful money shall have been tendered to the incumbent of such livings by the occupiers of land, or by any person on their behalf, the same shall be an effectual bar to any action or further proceeding at law or otherwise."

PLURALITY OF BENEFICES.*

(September 13. 1831.)

The Archbishop of Canterbury having moved that the House resolve itself into a committee upon the Plurality of Benefices Bill, and some clauses having been agreed to; — On the question being put that the blank, in a subsequent clause, be filled up with the words "four hundred pounds," Lord King in reply to Lord Wynford, said: — I beg the noble and learned Lord's pardon, but there appears to me to be an objection to a part of the clause which precedes that to which he alludes. Now, my Lords, the provision to which I allude enacts, that it shall be lawful for the bishop, under certain circumstances, to grant a dispensation, empowering a clergyman to hold a second living. This provision appears to me to destroy every benefit which the bill might be supposed to confer. If the dispensation is to be granted to any amount, I confess I really can see no improvement in the existing state of things, — I should say it would be an improvement to allow small livings to be held together, not large ones; but if they are to extend to any amount, I think the case which the noble and learned Lord has put with respect to the living of Stanhope would be one of frequent and ordinary occurrence. It certainly would be desirable to set some limit, because the present system of pluralities in great livings is really a great abuse. I, of course, can have no possible objection to provide for the decent and proper maintenance of the clergy, and therefore, I should not dispute the propriety of

* From the "Mirror of Parliament," 1831.

adding two small livings together for the maintenance of a clergyman, when one is not sufficient for that purpose. With this view I brought in the bill, which I introduced some time since to your Lordships' notice; but I should have taken shame to myself if I had fixed the limit at a lower sum than 500*l.*, which I thought would guard against the existence of this evil. I am well aware that it may appear presumptuous on the part of any person in my situation, to bring forward any bill upon this subject, but I did so with a view of improving the system; and I object to this bill, because I do not think that it at all goes to the root of the evil. It was suggested to me, when I moved the first reading of my bill, that I should advance the principle of the measure, if I consented to engraft it on the bill of the right reverend Prelate; but, on inquiry, I found that the machinery and details of the two measures were so different, it would be impossible for me to adopt that suggestion. I say this, I am sure, without intending the slightest disrespect to the right reverend Prelate; indeed, if he has done me the honour of reading my bill, I think he will at once allow that the machinery and details of the two are so different, that it would be utterly impossible to combine them. I must say, with all due respect to the bill, that I think, when this latitude is given, it cannot be efficacious in removing the evils which at present exist. I cannot help thinking that the existing abuses will be suffered to remain as they are at present.

My Lords, when I heard the sum of 400*l.* mentioned,—when I thought that was to be the limit,—I imagined we were going to have a complete and thorough reform of the Church of England; I thought we were going to place it once more upon an apostolical footing; and that, if we were not going to provide that each single shepherd should take care

of his own flock, we were going to establish a principle as nearly as possible of that description. Of course, entertaining these expectations, I conceived that no possible objection could exist to the bill. But I now find that no limit is to be fixed, and that, in fact, the evils which have been so long complained of are not to be removed.

Now, with respect to non-residents, I will beg to state to your Lordships one fact as to the comparative number of non-residents now, and five-and-twenty or thirty years ago, when the bill, which I called Sir William Scott's Bill—and in doing which, by-the-bye, I gave great offence to the noble Lord—was introduced;—I say, that if the old law had remained in existence, we should not have had the number of pluralities we now have. It appears from a return I moved for, this year, that the number of clergymen who reside on their benefices is 2098; now, my Lords, if I go back to exactly twenty years ago, I find that the number of residents on their benefices was 2050; so that they have rather increased than diminished. If I look to the number of non-residents now, I shall find it is 6083; I think it was 6260. Therefore, in this respect there is a small diminution. I will beg to move, that all the words from "and that shall be of the just amount and value," down to the end of the clause be omitted.

The question was then put, "That these words stand part of the clause."—Agreed to.

The question was then put, "That the blank be filled up with the words 400*l.*"—Agreed to.

TITHES — IRELAND.

(February 23. 1832.)

Lord King had several petitions to present to their Lordships from places and persons in Ireland, praying for the abolition of tithes, and for resuming the church lands. They were from Old Leighlin, Wells, Killinane, Tallowcreen, Killrew, Tryvett, and from the members of the National Trades' Political Union of Dublin. The latter contained statements which fully showed the injustice of the existing system. In presenting these petitions, he begged leave to point out the enormous amount of many church livings. In the county of Down, the petitioners stated there was one worth 3,700*l.* a year; in Cloyne, some were 2000*l.*, others 1,800*l.*; and six were worth 1,500*l.* In the county of Cork, there were fifty-six livings worth 46,000*l.* per annum; and the bishop's land in that county consisted of 671,000 acres. The petitioners concluded by stating, that, between the years 1817 and 1822, there had been 3,039 tithe causes tried. Their Lordships must observe the difference which existed between the tithe system of England and that of Ireland. In England it was a tax on profit; in Ireland it was an immediate tax on the cultivation of the soil, and, if not abolished, the people must starve; it had become a question whether the people should exist or not. He believed the matter had gone as far as it could, and that it was impossible longer to maintain the present system of tithes in Ireland: indeed, he considered that the question of their extinction was as much settled as if an act of parliament for effecting that object had already

passed the legislature. He trusted that there would be no contest with the people of Ireland, no coercion; for, sure he was, that the people of England would not consent to pay one single pound sterling in support of such a cause. The people of Ireland were unalterably determined on the total extinction of tithes. The question would be settled in the same way as Catholic emancipation was settled: the law would be passed when it was impossible longer to resist. By not giving timely relief to the Catholics, they had brought that Association into existence, which no one could deny was the means of carrying Catholic emancipation. So it would be with tithes. The most impolitic course possible would be, to enter into a contest with the people, either for the purpose of enforcing the payment of tithes now due, or for the collection of those which might become due hereafter, for certain it was, that the result of such a contest must be that those who undertook the office of collecting them would be defeated.

Petitions to lie on the table.

TITHES — IRELAND.

(February 28. 1832.)

Lord King had several petitions to present from different places in the county of Meath, calling upon Parliament to take the Church property of Ireland again into its hands, and from it to provide for the clergy of every denomination in that country. In this prayer he concurred; for it was impossible that any one who looked at the signs of the times should not come to the conclusion, that the present system of

tithes could not be permitted to continue. In point of fact, the tithes had, in a great degree, been wrested from those who held them; and therefore it was necessary that the legislature should show itself disposed to agree to some adjustment of this important question, which would give satisfaction to those who had already obtained the victory. He did not object to tithes, because they were the property of the Church, but because they were a pernicious description of property. But how stood the case with regard to Church property generally, the tenure of which he was surprised to hear a noble Lord declare to be as good and clear in the Church, as was the title of their Lordships to their own estates? So different was his opinion, that he said broadly, that tithes belonged to the people: they were, or at least ought, to constitute a fund for providing religious instruction, and for affording charitable and religious consolation to the community. These, he contended, were the true, original, legitimate objects, for which all Church property was granted. Tithes were a part of the property of the state, and of the people, and had often been dealt with accordingly. Tithe, not unfrequently, had been dealt with without looking to the tenure of the individual possessing an interest in it; for the right to tithe had been forfeited in cases where the individual had refused to adopt the religion of the State. If at the present moment, as at the Reformation, an alteration in the established religion was to take place, the incumbent would lose his living, if he refused to conform to such alteration. In the same way, and on the same principle, oaths had been occasionally prescribed to be administered to the clergy, which, if not taken at once by the incumbent, would subject him to deprivation. In various ways the State had interfered with Church property. If the State were now to endow a Catholic Church in Great Britain,

could there be any doubt from whence the fund for the payment of the clergy of that establishment must come? The money for that purpose must come from the funds provided and set apart for religious instruction; and he ventured to say, that until the Catholic Church was endowed with a portion of those funds, neither peace, order, nor tranquillity would prevail in Ireland. There was no other mode of effecting that object, than by giving to the body in question their fair share of the wealth of the Church; which was, originally, set apart for instructing and affording religious consolation to the whole of the people of that country. Such a measure would be the best distribution of this vast property, and would purchase the peace of Ireland. He had heard from noble Lords on the opposite side of the House the most indecorous, extravagant, and high-flying pretensions in respect of Church property. He had heard it stated, that the tenure of Church property stood on a higher footing than that of any other description of property: a more injudicious assertion could not be made. He had no wish that the tithe should belong to the landlord, who had no claim to it; but when he heard it laid down that this property could not be touched, he begged to point out to the promulgators of such an absurd doctrine the difference which existed between this and other species of property. Tithe was the property of the State, held for life by the clergy, on the consideration of performing certain services to the public. Tithe was subject to the operation of capricious, arbitrary circumstances, in a way and to a degree which attached to no other species of property, and it might amount to much or little, at any period, according to circumstances. If the owner of the land cultivated corn he had to pay a full tenth; if, however, he laid his land down in grass, the tithe would be less; if he planted it and turned it into forest, there

would be no tithe at all. These were varying conditions of circumstances, which did not exist in respect of any other sort of property. Then, again, as to the origin of tithe, other property was not derived from the law, it was only protected by it; but tithe was altogether derived from the law, and never existed but as separated from or granted by the Crown. He would next draw their Lordships' attention to other instances in which this property had been interfered with. According to existing statutes, if barren lands were brought into cultivation, they were exempted, for the first seven years, from the payment of tithe; so that here was an example, in which the property that was to yield tithe was wholly valueless to the tithe-owner for a number of years. Then, again, the Irish law said, there shall be no tithe of agistment; there was also the Irish Composition Act, the operation of which, it was provided, should be voluntary. He rather thought the framers of that statute now wished that it had been compulsory. These statutes, however, were all direct interferences with this species of property on the part of the legislature. The Archbishop of Canterbury had also brought in a bill for effecting a composition of tithes in England. That most rev. Prelate, however, was not the first person who had suggested a measure of this description, for Mr. Pitt caused a Bill to be brought into the House of Commons for effecting a composition of tithes, in the same manner that the land-tax was redeemed,—and so as not to leave the amount of the tithe collected in the hands of the tithe-owner, but to entitle him, in lieu thereof, to receive a certain amount of consols. Dr. Paley, also, was a strenuous advocate for the commutation of tithe; and he could bring forward many other eminent authorities, who long ago considered that tithe was a pernicious species of property, and were anxious

to get rid of it by commutation, or some other mode. Could that be said of any other species of property? It was said, that if tithes were touched, all other descriptions of property would be endangered; and noble Lords said, "Look to France." He repeated the advice, "Look to France:" there was no tithe in France; it existed only in England and Ireland. He recommended them in conclusion to imitate the example of France, to provide comfortably for the clergy, but to commute at once, and for ever, tithe into a moderate land-tax. Nothing but that could save the Church both in England and Ireland from utter destruction. His Lordship concluded by presenting a petition from Kilnesson against tithes, &c.

This petition, with several others of the same nature, presented also by Lord King, from various parts of Ireland, was laid on the table.

PLURALITIES BILL.

(March 5. 1832.)

Lord King begged to state, that it was not his intention to oppose the bill as a whole, because he did not think the existence of all pluralities in the Church an evil, but he hoped the bill would be materially altered in the committee. There were few persons, he believed, throughout the country who did not now call themselves moderate reformers, but then they would only concede the very *minimum* of reform, and that was the character which this bill deserved. It must be considered, from the very little way it went in remedying the evils of holding pluralities, to be the most unsatisfactory and disappoint-

ing that could have been brought forward. Such a measure might have been considered highly beneficial thirty years ago; but the change which had taken place in the minds of the people at large during that period would induce them to be any thing but satisfied with this measure, if it was similar to that which was before the House last year, and he understood it was, and which went to limit the distance within which two livings might be held by the same incumbent, to thirty instead of forty-five miles, and the taking of livings beyond that limit, subjecting the clergyman doing so to the forfeiture of the first living so held by him; and this he understood to be the tenor of the present bill. That there were great abuses existing in the Church no one would have the temerity to deny; and the greatest of all these abuses was that of two rich benefices being held by one and the same person. But did this bill go to the correction of that crying evil? Certainly not. The rule was that all pluralities were abuses, and their existence could only be justified on special grounds, the principal one being, where the livings were so small and near together that the duties could be performed satisfactorily by the same person, and where the amount of the funds receivable in each case was only an adequate remuneration for the services actually performed. But, admitting the propriety of this exception to the general rule, was that any reason why two large and rich benefices should be held by the same person? Dispensations of this kind converted the profession of ministers of the Gospel into a trade, which had the lucre of gain for its object. There was nothing like this existing in the Roman Catholic Church, it being, in point of fact, an abuse which belonged exclusively to the Church of England. He had not yet been able to discover how it was that a bishop, in addition to his see, was

allowed to hold a deanery, or a prebendary, or a large and wealthy living *in commendam*, and he wished to be informed whether this bill remedied that abuse? If it did not, every friend of the Established Church must be satisfied the bill would be of very little value, and could not possibly be considered satisfactory, more particularly when it was recollected that the religion of the Established Church was not the religion of the majority of the people of this country. He pledged himself to that fact; and the inference he drew from it was, that the Established Church could not afford to lose its character by permitting the continuance of such an abuse. If there was one circumstance more than another that would operate to benefit the interests of the Established Church, it would be that of preventing the holding of two great livings by the same individual, and that object this bill did not go to effect. One of the principal evils resulting from the practice was, that it led to non-residence. The number of non-resident clergymen of the Establishment, as appeared by the last return, greatly exceeded the number of those who were resident; the number of the former being 6,080, and of the latter 4,416. This was the great grievance which ought to be abolished. The legislature had endeavoured, the House of Commons particularly had made great efforts to remedy this abuse. The Act of Henry VIII. was passed for that purpose; so also were those of Edward and Elizabeth; and, lastly, that of Charles, which ensued upon the second Reformation, an Act which had for its object to restore the ejected ministers who had been turned out by Oliver Cromwell. That Act says, "if the minister shall have been ejected out of two ecclesiastical benefices for the cure of souls, he shall be restored to one, and no more." These were the words of the Act of Charles II. He did not think it ne-

cessary to stop to ask how the practice of holding pluralities began; certain it was, that it existed for a long period, and that it had, from time to time, found apologists among the ministers of the Church. Bishop Hooker was one among the early apologists for the practice; and he said, "The number of livings in the Church is so great, and the number of learned men to fill them so small,. that you must either not let the livings be severed, or you must have incompetent persons appointed to them. Of two evils choose the least: it is better that one learned and competent person should be appointed to two livings, than that they should be severed, and two unlearned men be appointed." Another reason assigned for non-residence was, in order to enable persons to reside at the university, for the purpose of obtaining further knowledge, that they might be more fitting for their occupation, and more useful in their calling at a future period. The reasons for the adoption of this practice might be very good ones at the time it originated; but they could not be considered applicable as regarded the present times. The clergy of the present day had attained a much greater degree of fitness for their sacred duties; and there was no reason to suppose that there would be any numerical deficiency in their body, or that the demand for their services would be greater than the means of supply. Bishop Burnett was of opinion, that many abuses had been purged out, but that many still continued in his time in the Church, among which was to be found that of pluralities, which had not been purged out, notwithstanding all the outcry that was made on the subject at the Reformation. These were abuses which the Church of Rome was ashamed of, and which Queen Mary even had endeavoured to root out. Such was the opinion of Burnett on pluralities and non-residence, and his authority was strengthened, if

it needed any support, by that of Archbishop Usher. It was wholly unnecessary to enter into any lengthened argument to show that the present bill was, in truth, nothing more than a mockery and delusion. He therefore hoped, when they came to consider it in committee, the right reverend Bench would permit it to be rendered in some degree efficient, or they might depend upon its never becoming a law.

PLURALITIES BILL.

(March 23. 1832.)

Lord King thought it was somewhat extraordinary to hear the very reverend Prelate (the Archbishop of Canterbury), in the present state of public opinion respecting the revenues of the Church, say that an income of 4000*l.* per annum was inadequate to the support of a bishop. He thought that was an extraordinary argument to adduce in defence of the fifteen benefices held *in commendam* by the Bench of Bishops: the most reverend Prelate also considered 1000*l.* as rather little for the comfortable support of one of the parochial clergy having a large family to provide for; — as that was the most reverend Prelate's opinion, he would recommend him to take into consideration what had been said last year by a noble Lord on the opposite benches, that the average income of the parochial clergy was no more than 185*l.* per annum each. What truth there might be in that statement he could not say. He would leave it to the noble and learned Lord opposite (Lord Wynford) and the most reverend Prelate to settle between them. He thought it would be a very proper mode of raising those lower livings and lifting the poor clergy from

their poverty, to take something from the large revenues of the bishops. In that way the incomes of the parochial clergy might very well be raised to the standard fixed upon by the most reverend Archbishop. He should like to see the bishops come forward generously of themselves, and make that spontaneous sacrifice of their superfluities. It would be a great relief to their consciences, and it might be all the better for their souls hereafter, that they should have given up that which they ought never to have received. The most reverend Prelate complained that the bill had been called a delusion: it was nothing else. It professed to take away the privileges which the Act of Henry VIII. gave to the chaplains and to the sons of the nobility. That was one of its first provisions. Well, and what did it provide next? Why it gave to every Master of Arts that same privilege of holding two benefices; thus with one hand closing a door, and with the other opening it much wider than before, for the Masters of Arts were a more numerous class than the chaplains and sons of peers. Besides, the bill might operate to give those same persons whose privilege it professed to take away the same rights in another manner, for it gave the privilege of holding two livings to every person whom the bishop of his diocese might recommend to the Archbishop of Canterbury. That most reverend Prelate said, "For God's sake don't throw upon me the responsibility of creating pluralists; let somebody else have the responsibility, though I have the power of conferring the appointments!" But the most reverend Prelate did not object in the same way to have the responsibility which was attached to the power of uniting large benefices. Now that was a responsibility from which he would be very happy to see the most reverend Prelate relieved. The Canon law forbad pluralities. But abuses had grown

up from time to time, not only in the Church of the Pope, but in the Established Church of England also. The Pope encouraged abuses; and the Church of England encouraged abuses; and what reason was there why the Church should not be brought back to the good old Canon Law, which would extinguish the abuses? If the pluralities were to be maintained, he did not see any necessity for burdening the Archbishop with the responsibility of creating them. If there was any uncertainty as to the value of the livings, let there be a valuation, which would remove the uncertainty. But the most reverend Prelate was afraid that if there were a valuation the clergy would make false returns. Perhaps they might do so. Indeed, he thought they would do so; and to prevent it, he brought in a bill last year to compel them to make a correct return, by giving their respective parishes the power to tender the amount of the valuation in commutation for tithes and dues, and binding them to accept it without any remedy. That would have settled the matter; but the present bill was a net so contrived to take in all the rich benefices, and leave the poor ones out. The higher classes of the clergy talked a good deal about their compassion for their poorer brethren, and they proved their sincerity, not by allowing them to hold two small livings, but by leaving them to starve upon one. The most reverend Prelate seemed to be in some doubt whether it would not be better to lay the bill aside for a while, and think better of it: and, indeed, if he had any respect for his own child, he ought to do so. If it escaped a severe handling in that House, it would be terribly mauled in another place.

PLURALITY OF BENEFICES BILL — THE THIRD READING.*

(April 2. 1832.)

Lord King said, the right reverend Prelate has endeavoured to show, that at least that part of the Church establishment which relates to the see of Durham is not overpaid, and that it presents a remarkable instance of moderate remuneration for services performed. Now what has the right reverend Prelate done? After going through a great variety of details, he has succeeded in proving that Mr. Thorp, instead of 12,000*l.* a year, receives 8000*l.* Only 8000*l.* a year! I am surprised that, on this occasion, none of the Prebendaries of the stalls of Durham have come forward to state what is the value of those preferments. I see a right reverend Prelate in his place, who can give your Lordships some information on this point. I trust that when the new valuation of Church property may take place, we shall have an accurate account of the revenues of the see of Durham. With respect to the bill, I must say that I think the Bishops alone will benefit by it. They have contrived, very adroitly, to obtain some credit to themselves for limiting pluralities, when, in fact, their own patronage is not at all interfered with. I must say, that I think this bill smells of Jesuitism. Does it propose to prevent that which is allowed to be objectionable? No; it does not prevent large and populous livings being held as pluralities. It does not take value into consideration at all. It should be recollected that the great patronage of the right reverend

* From "The Mirror of Parliament."

Prelates lies chiefly within their own diocese, and will, therefore, come within the limits prescribed by the bill. If, however, the whole of their patronage should not be included within those limits, they possess facilities of exchanging livings one with another, and thereby of promoting the interest of their favourites. Thus, whilst the right reverend Prelates have pretended to grant some reformation, they have done nothing which affects their own interests. Whoever has attended to the arguments which have been advanced in favour of this bill, must have observed that the interests of the clergy only have been taken into consideration, and not those of the congregations. This is precisely in accordance with the old Tory and high Church principle, of the money being made for one.

I think the right reverend Prelates have been short-sighted in bringing forward this measure, because they have shown that they are bit-by-bit reformers, who intend to grant no real reform whatever. One of the arguments urged in favour of pluralities is, that high prices are necessary as a reward for merit. I submitted a proposition which would, in some degree, have confined these high prices to men of merit. My proposition was, that pluralities should be held only by those who had obtained high honours at the universities. I was told that this was the worst possible test of merit. I ask the right reverend Prelates to give me any test which will afford a security that these high prices will be conferred upon merit: but no, they will do nothing of the kind. We are told, from another quarter, that there is nothing bad in the system of pluralities where proper curates are employed and provided for. But all the money that goes to the incumbent, after payment of the curate, is so much more taken from the parishioners than

is necessary to provide a well-educated gentleman to perform the religious duties of the parish. It is undeniable that an overpaid Church is injurious either to the people or the state. The money which is unnecessarily paid to the Church should either be paid to the State, or left in the pockets of the people.

We are promised a new valuation of Church property. I should like to know when the idea of this project first presented itself to the right reverend Prelates? Was it before the see of Derry became vacant? If so, why did they not then begin their valuation? We are told that the right reverend Prelates entertain a desire to effect improvements in the Church. My answer is,—the see of Derry! When that see was vacant, the government desired to reduce the revenues attached to it: but, if public rumour and statements in newspapers can be relied upon, the right reverend Prelates offered insurmountable objections to this course. I think that when this bill goes to the other House of Parliament, it will meet with very different treatment to that which it has experienced here—they will send it back in such a shape, that the right reverend Prelates will not know their own child again; and, believing that it deserves to meet with such a fate, I shall raise my voice against its passing.

CHURCH PROPERTY.

(June 14. 1832.)

Lord King, in presenting a petition from Bcominster (Wilts) against tithes, declaring that Church property was the property of the public, of which Parliament might dispose in that way which it might consider most advantageous to the public interest, said, as there were several Prelates present, he would take that opportunity of noticing a declaration made on a former occasion by a right reverend Prelate (the Bishop of London) who denied that the property of the Church was public property, or that the legislature had a right to interfere with it. That right reverend Prelate had asked, if a man had charged his estate with a certain sum for the maintenance of a clergyman, would he (Lord King) disturb that charge, or think that the legislature should interfere with it. He (Lord King) would admit that the legislature had no right to touch it. But this case bore no analogy to the question of Church property as it now stood. But supposing that the major part of it had been the gift of pious individuals, even in that case the legislature had a right to interfere if the property had been diverted from the objects for which the pious donors had bestowed the property. The manner in which the property of the Church had been disposed of at the Reformation, and at the Revolution, showed that it was considered public property. But as the right reverend Prelate had put a question to him, he would put a question to the right reverend Prelate in his turn. He would suppose a case—it was a case merely hypothetical, and which, of course, was in the highest degree im-

probable. Suppose that the bishops of our Church were to become political characters, and were to take a very decided part against the general feeling of the country — so much so, as to become unpopular and odious to that degree, that they could scarcely show themselves in the public streets, or even appear in their own pulpits, — and suppose that, in consequence of their political conduct, it was deemed expedient that they should be deprived of their temporal power, and farther, that they should be deprived of their seats in that House, — and suppose farther, that it should be deemed expedient to change the whole discipline of the Church, and to abolish the hierarchy, and establish a presbytery in its stead, would it not follow that the present holders of Church dignities and Church property would be obliged to relinquish those dignities and that property, if they refused to conform to the new state of things? Undoubtedly it would; for if the State had a right to make such changes (and who would question that right?), it would have a right also to arrange and dispose of the Church property in conformity with them. But could this be the case if the property of the Church were to be considered solely as private property? The property of the Church, he contended, was originally given for the general purpose of promoting Christianity itself. During the dominion of Popery in this country, no other form of Christianity was permitted to be publicly preached or taught; and, for a long time after the Reformation, the Church of England kept up the same intolerant spirit; but now, all civil distinctions being removed, and all men being equal in the eye of the law, without any reference to their religion, it might well become a question for consideration, whether the property originally given for the general promotion of Christianity ought not to be divided amongst the various Christian sects in this country; and the more so, as it

was well known that the great body of the inhabitants of this country did not belong to the Established Church. With these remarks, he would now move that the petition be read.

The petition having been read, was laid on the table.

CHURCH REFORM.

(February 7. 1833.)

Lord King said, that seeing several right reverend Prelates in their places, he would take that opportunity of moving for some papers in relation to the revenues of the Church. He was glad to hear that the task of reforming the Church had been undertaken by ministers, for he was convinced that the reform, to be useful and good, must come from the government. It could not be expected that any useful reform of abuses in the Church should come from the members of the Church themselves. He said this because it was proved by experience, from the Reformation down to the present time, that the prelates of the Church had shown themselves more disposed to protect the many abuses of the Church, than that a reformation should take place, and they had used all their influence and power, as belonging to the second estate of the realm holding seats in that House, to prevent reform. The abuses which he wished to see remedied were those in which the high prelates were most concerned, deriving their revenues partly from them, and which, therefore, they were not likely to reform. It was impossible that these prelates could be ignorant of those abuses, because they, in their own character,

derived part of their revenues from them, and they had enjoyed, as members of some chapters, part of the incomes which those bodies derived from clerical abuses. He alluded not only to those livings held by the bishops in conjunction with their sees, and which were annexed to them from time immemorial, but to those livings which were held by ecclesiastical corporations, which deriving large revenues from them, allowed to the efficient minister of the parish a miserable pittance, scandalously inadequate to the duties he had to perform. He meant to move for an account, which would be of great importance, to show the distribution of the revenues of the Church; it was an account of the salaries and stipends which were given to the actual officiating ministers in those parishes, the tithes and incomes of which belonged to any ecclesiastical corporation. Those ministers were now paid as they were paid two centuries ago, and he would quote some instances of this, believing, at the same time, that there were many others. The first was the living of Silverton in Devonshire, the income of which was 600*l.* a year, and the ecclesiastical corporation to which it belonged gave the minister 60*l.* At Swinbridge and Landkey, in the same county, a minister received 40*l.* to perform one service in each of these parishes, the revenue of which went to the Dean and Chapter of Exeter. The Dean had taken care, in renewing the leases, to get as large a sum as possible for himself; but he had given the officiating minister only 40*l.* The next he would refer to was Norton, which belonged to the Canons of Windsor, who paid 60*l.* to the officiating clergyman. At South Molton, belonging to the Canons of Winchester, the clergyman had received 60*l.*; he now received 80*l.*, though this place contained a population of nearly 4,000 souls, and for this 80*l.* he had to perform all the clerical duties required by so large a

population. He might mention a great number of similar instances, but it was unnecessary. There was the parish or township of Preston Holderness, in which an inclosure some years ago was given to the Sub-dean of York, who took all this to himself, and allowed the vicar to scrape together what remained, amounting to about 60*l.* a year altogether, including some small tithes which did not pay the expense of collection. These cases might be illustrated by others. He had last year brought under the notice of the House the case of Trinity College, Cambridge, which gave a minister 90*l.* in a living worth 2000*l.*; while one of the colleges at Oxford gave a minister of such a parish 30*l.*, which was made up to 70*l.* by the subscriptions of the inhabitants. If the Bishops had not the power, as was said, to remedy these abuses—if they could not dispose of these revenues, or order better stipends—they ought to apply to Parliament to obtain the power. It was their duty to see that there were no abuses, and if there were, and they had not the means to correct them, they ought to apply to Parliament. Of these abuses, as he had said before, they could not be ignorant because they had profited by these abuses themselves. The King's speech recommended an equitable distribution of the revenues of the Church. He hoped that this equalization would take place; he hoped that pluralities would be done away with, and he wished in addition, in order that ecclesiastical persons might not neglect their duties, that they might be confined to their spiritual functions. These were the important principles of reform which he wished to see carried into effect. It might be interesting to see what the clergy had already done. What had they done to promote an equalization of Church revenues? He found on looking back, that the only measure which had any tendency to equalize

these revenues was the measure for augmenting the salaries of the smaller livings; but that, instead of taking anything from the large livings, had been effected by grants from the public, to the amount of 1,200,000*l.* The addition to the smaller livings, which was the most important step he knew of for equalizing the revenues, had been supplied by the public, and had taken nothing from the wealth of the deans and chapters, whom he regarded as the friars and monks of Protestantism. The next reform of the Church, on which some stress had been laid, was remarkable. An old Act of Parliament existed, which was supposed to be beneficial in enforcing residence. A certain person who knew of the Act, found out that by bringing certain *qui tam* actions, he might get a reward for himself, or enforce residence. But what had the clergy done? When it was ascertained that this measure would be effectual in producing residence, the power was taken from the individual of bringing these *qui tam* actions, by Sir William Scott's bill. That bill was brought in with the concurrence of the clergy, and for their relief by the then member for Oxford. It was not supposed to be good to enforce residence, and they were relieved from that by the bill in question. Another useful reform was doing away with pluralities. He could state openly that the bill professing that was a mere delusion. He and others had endeavoured to make something of it, but the amendments they had proposed had been resisted. He wanted to limit the amount of income with which a plurality might be held; but the Bishops, who were the greatest pluralists, resisted that. The bill, then, was a mere delusion, and it was dead-born. He recollected, too, the rumour which prevailed last year about the see of Derry. It was said, that the government, when the see of Derry fell vacant, intended to limit its revenues;

but that was opposed by the English Bishops. The clergy objected to having the revenue of this overgrown see curtailed, and the project was given up. They were like certain other persons, who refused every bit-by-bit reform, and he was rather afraid that they might find that this see of Derry was the East-Retford of the Church. The last year some symptoms of a desire for reform were shown by the clergy of the see of Durham. They presented a memorial to their diocesan in favour of that reform; and what answer did they receive? Why, they were told, by a man less anxious for reform than themselves, that he regretted that they should bring forward any proposition on that subject during these times of excitement, because it was more likely to do harm than good. The Bishop rebuked and reproved them for their zeal in promoting a reformation of the Church. He was happy to find that it was now allowed that tithes begot animosity against the clergy, and that a better mode should be adopted of paying them. Within the last two or three years, however, a report had been made by the commissioners of real property, in which it was stated that a term of sixty years should be the extent of legal claims; but that recommendation found no favour with the clergy. If their Lordships looked at page 24 of the first report, they would find certain questions addressed to the right reverend Prelates. They were told that the commissioners would be unwilling to recommend any measure till they had heard the opinion of the reverend Prelates, and they requested the Prelates to give their answers to certain questions which they propounded, relative to the property of the Church. He asked the right reverend Prelates whether they had attended to these questions, and whether they had given them any answers? They were put two years ago, and he could find no answer which had

been given to them. The commissioners of real property had not received any further information relating to tithes. There had been a bill brought in by a right reverend Prelate, but it was, he believed, of a piece with other measures proceeding from the same source—not intended to effect much good. The noble Lord concluded by moving for "a return from all the dioceses of England and Wales stating the livings, the tithes of which belonged to deans and chapters or other ecclesiastical corporations; and, thereto annexed, a return of the annual stipend allotted to the minister who served each parish in 1831."

Motion withdrawn.

QUEEN ANNE'S BOUNTY.

(March 12. 1833.)

Lord King said, he rose for the purpose of moving for certain returns, showing various payments which had been made by the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty and the commissioners of the Parliamentary grant. The more he looked into this subject the more he was convinced that a shameful misappropriation had been made—that the fund had been most improperly diverted to purposes the very reverse of which it had been originally destined for. This wanted immediate correction; and the only correction that could satisfy him—the only one that was proper and equitable—was, that all funds so improperly applied should be refunded. He knew not a more crying abuse than that the dignitaries of the Church, who were impropriators of the tithes of parishes, and

in many instances afforded the most miserable pittance to the incumbents, should have these livings augmented by large sums from Queen Anne's Bounty, and the annual grant voted by Parliament. He could call this nothing else than obtaining money under false pretences, and those pretences of the most flagrant and unworthy character. These grants were obtained under the plea that the livings thus benefited were poor ones, when, in fact, they were rich benefices with poor-paid incumbents. What he maintained, ever had maintained, and ever would maintain, was, that these poor incumbents ought to have been maintained out of the benefices themselves, and not to have come on a public fund for relief and support. It was a complaint of long standing, that the stipends of the ministers had remained till of late years the same, or nearly so, as in the reign of Edward IV. and Elizabeth, although the value of money had so changed; and he contended, that the bishops and the other dignitaries of the Church had not contributed their just proportions to the payment of their poorer clergy; for the whole amount paid by them since the year 1703, when Queen Anne relinquished this branch of the revenue of the Crown, was about 2,400,000*l.*, whereas, if they had contributed according to the real value of the tithes, they would have paid by this time near 30,000,000*l.* They had unfairly and improperly taken advantage of Queen Anne's Bounty, and Parliamentary grant, though augmenting the incomes of livings held by their own servants and curates, out of that "Bounty," when such augmentation ought to have been made out of their own resources, and not out of any public funds. He would come to the facts. The Deans and Canons of Windsor were the impropriators of the tithe of the following parishes:— (and here he begged leave to state, that the sums stated to be advanced out of the Parliamentary grant

and Queen Anne's Bounty were correctly given; he had examined them carefully, and pledged himself for their accuracy). The greater part of the sums to which he should refer, were stated to have been advanced by lot. The governors of Queen Anne's Bounty drew, as they called it, a certain number of livings under 50*l.* where the population exceeded 1,000, with a view of giving several augmentations, according to the circumstances of each case, with regard to population, duty, and income; and it did so happen, that the high dignitaries of the Church were the fortunate impropriators of the tithe of many of the largest parishes, where the population even of rural districts exceeded 1,000, and where, from rigid adherence to the ancient scale of paying their curates, the other qualification of a living under 50*l.* indisputably brought them within the rule of admission. With regard to benefactions, livings under 30*l.* might receive 200*l.* without any benefaction; but in cases where a benefaction of 200*l.* was made by any person, the sum of 300*l.* is paid out of Queen Anne's Bounty as augmentation; but, of late, these payments had been made very much out of the Parliamentary annual grant. The places on his list (with reference to the case of the Dean and Chapter of Windsor) were as follows. The noble Lord read this statement:— "Dean and Canons of Windsor, impropriators of the following parishes, received from Parliamentary grant and Queen Anne's Bounty:—Plymsted, 1811, 600*l.*; 1812, 400*l.*; 1815, 300*l.*: Plympton, 600*l.*: St. Germans, 1811, 800*l.*; 1814, 400*l.*" He was told that the rental of the tithes of these parishes was 4000*l.* a year; but he did not mean to say that the Dean and Chapter received so much. The population, however, was very large; and they were assessed at 18,000*l.*, 15,000*l.*, and 10,000*l.* to the property-tax. Then came "Wembury, 1807, 200*l.*; 1816, 1400*l.*: Nor-

tham, 1764, 200*l.*; 1812, 400*l.*: S. Molton, 1813, 600*l.*" He ought to state, that the Dean and Canons of Windsor had raised the scale of remuneration to their stipendiary curates, under the bill of 1831; and he did not know at present whether any sum had been advanced to these parishes by the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty during the last year or not. Their Lordships, however, must recollect that the last year was a great and important year; the Reform Bill passed, and people began to think of things they never thought of before. He came next to the case of the Dean and Canons of Winchester, impropriators of two parishes in Wales; parish assessed at 10,000*l.* property-tax; curate's salary 31*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* These parishes were, "Holt, 1725, 200*l.*; 1733, 200*l.*: Iscoyd, 1749, 200*l.*; 1757, 200*l.*; 1798, 200*l.*; 1818, 200*l.*" Again, the "Dean of Exeter was impropriator of tithe of Landkey and Swinbridge, and in 1775 that parish received 200*l.*; 1810, 200*l.*; 1815, 1400*l.*: Swinbridge, 1750, 200*l.*; 1811, 400*l.*" The noble Lord also enumerated the following cases: "Dean and Chapter of Carlisle, impropriators of valuable tithe: Hesket, 1813, 600*l.*; 1815, 2000*l.* to purchase land; 1816, 300*l.*; 1817, 300*l.*: Dean of Bangor, impropriator of tithe of (curate paid 32*l.* 4*s.*) Gyffin, 1767, 200*l.*; 1810, 200*l.*; 1816, 1400*l.*: Bishop of Bangor, impropriator of valuable tithe of (curate paid 30*l.* 12*s.*) Llandegal, 1812, 200*l.*; 1815, 1600*l.*;——300*l.*;——300*l.*: Bishop of Lichfield, impropriator of large duties in Merionethshire (curate paid only 27*l.*), Tallylyn, 1808, 200*l.*; 1816, 1400*l.*; Penal, 1810, 200*l.*" The noble Lord continued—The two collegiate bodies of Winchester and Windsor, with the three deaneries of Exeter, Carlisle, and Bangor, had alone received 14,500*l.* from Queen Anne's Bounty! It was not to be endured that the deans and chapters, registers, and all the other rubbish of

cathedrals, should take so much, more especially too of what did not belong to, or never was intended for, them. For his part, he could only find one language in which to address them; he could only say, "Get you gone, give place to honest men—men who really work, who are really a pattern, as well by their lives as by their precepts—who know their calling, and act up to it." They were ready enough to say in other places that the labourer was worthy of his hire, but they were not so ready to enforce their preaching by the power of example. It was said, that those who served the altar should live by the altar, and so said he. Sincerely did he wish that principle were acted on, but unfortunately it happened that those who really served got badly paid. He wished to see the drones driven from the honeycombs. The working clergy bitterly felt that there was a shocking inequality in these matters, and in that feeling the public at large most deeply participated. He would take the liberty of reading an extract from a work, entitled an *Essay on the Causes of Dissension in Wales*. The author stated, in reference to the county of Merionethshire: "The prominent abuse of this county is the sacrifice of four of its parishes, which supply 1100*l.* to the support of the see of Lichfield. The living of Tallylyn had been given by the rapacious Normans to a nunnery in Essex; at the Reformation it was taken with much virtuous indignation from the Norman nunnery, and given to an English bishopric! To restore it to the people from whom it was taken, was a plain and obvious measure of equity. As an axiom of common justice, is it wise to base the religious institution of England on a galling system of absenteeism, and to make an exaction from the poorest county of North Wales, for the support of the hierarchy of the Church?" Now, he considered this to be an expression of very proper feeling—of a feeling

much more correct than that which prompted the late Mr. Perceval to declare, "that the poorest Welsh curate over his pot of beer, if he could get it, felt as much pride in the dignities and splendour of the higher ranks of his profession as those who fared sumptuously and enjoyed its most bountiful provisions every day." He knew not whether this was true at the time, but at present it certainly was not. On the contrary, there was the strongest feeling, among the working clergy, of the hardships they endure from the shameful inequality with which the revenues of the Church were distributed. The noble Lord concluded by moving:—"For an account of all poor livings in England and Wales which had received any augmentation, and what, from the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty, or the Parliamentary grant, and whether the tithes of the parish belonged to any dean or chapter, or were annexed to any see."

Motion withdrawn.

THE END.

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